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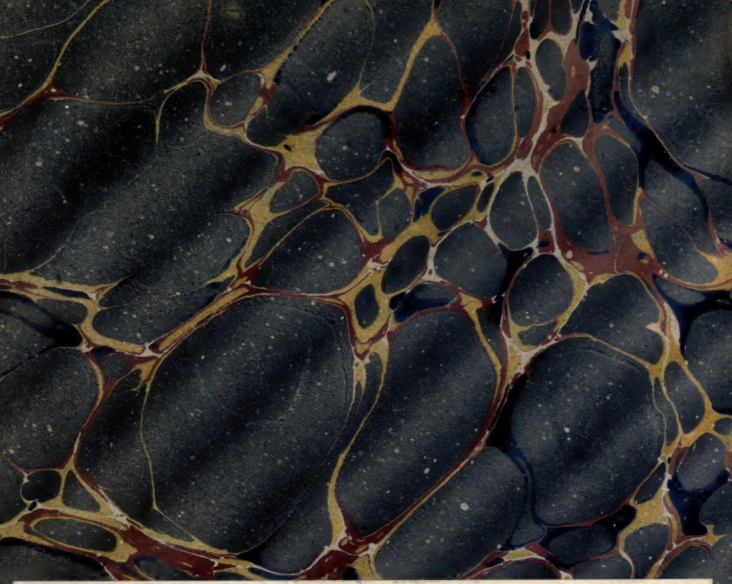

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VOL. LXXIX.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

PRINTED BY CRAPELET, 9, RUE DE VAUGIRARD.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY

SHERIDAN,

BY

THOMAS MOORE.

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PREFACE.

THE first four Chapters of this work were written nearly seven years ago. My task was then suspended during a long absence from England; and it was only in the course of the last year that I applied myself seriously to the completion of it.

To my friend, Mr. Charles Sheridan, whose talents and character reflect honour upon a name already so distinguished, I am indebted for the chief part of the materials upon which the following Memoirs of his father are founded. I have to thank him, not only for this mark of confidence, but for the delicacy with which, though so deeply interested in the subject of my task, he has refrained from all interference with the execution of it; —neither he, nor any other person, beyond the Printing-office, having ever read a single sentence of the work.

I mention this, in order that the responsibility of any erroneous views or indiscreet disclosures, with which I shall be thought chargeable in the course of these pages, may not be extended to others, but rest solely with myself.

The details of Mr. Sheridan's early life were obligingly

communicated to me by his younger sister Mrs. Lefanu, to whom, and to her highly gift d daughter, I offer my best thanks for the assistance which they have afforded me.

The obligations, of a similar nature, which I owe to the kindness of Mr. William Linley, Doctor Bain, Mr. Burgess, and others, are acknowledged with due gratitude in my remarks on their respective communications.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and education of Mr. Sheridan.—His first attempts in Literature.

RICHARD BRINSLEY [1] SHERIDAN was born in the month of September, 1751, at No. 12, Dorset Street, Dublin, and baptised in St. Mary's Church, as appears by the register of the parish, on the fourth of the following month. His grandfather, Dr. Sheridan, and his father, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, have attained a celebrity, independent of that which he has conferred on them, by the friendship and correspondence with which the former was honoured by Swift, and the competition and even rivalry which the latter so long maintained with Garrick. His mother, too, was a woman of considerable talents, and affords one of the few instances that have occurred, of a female indebted for a husband to her literature; as it was a pamphlet she wrote concerning the Dublin theatre that first attracted to her the notice of Mr. Thomas Sheridan. Her affecting novel, Sidney Biddulph, could boast among its warm panegyrists Mr. Fox and Lord North; and in the Tale of Nourjahad she has employed the graces of Eastern fiction to inculcate a grave and important moral,—putting on a fairy disguise, like her own Mandane, to deceive her readers into a taste for happiness and virtue. Besides her two plays, The Discovery and the Dupe,—the former of which Garrick pronounced to be "one of the best comedies he ever read,"—she wrote a comedy also, called the Trip to Bath, which was never either acted or published, but which has been supposed by some of those sagacious persons, who love to look for flaws in the

[1] He was christened also by the name of Butler, after the Earl of Lanesborough.

titles of fame, to have passed, with her other papers, into the possession of her son, and after a transforming sleep, like that of the chrysalis, in his hands, to have taken wing at length in the brilliant form of The Rivals. The literary labours of her husband were less fanciful, but not, perhaps, less useful, and are chiefly upon subjects connected with education, to the study and profession of which he devoted the latter part of his life. Such dignity, indeed, did his favourite pursuit assume in his own eyes, that he is represented (on the authority, however, of one who was himself a schoolmaster) to have declared, that "he would rather see his two sons at the head of respectable academies, than one of them prime minister of England, and the other at the head of affairs in Ireland."

At the age of seven years, Richard Brinsley Sheridan was, with his elder brother, Charles Francis, placed under the tuition of Mr. Samuel Whyte, of Grafton Street, Dublin,—an amiable and respectable man, who, for near fifty years after, continued at the head of his profession in that metropolis. To remember our school-days with gratitude and pleasure, is a tribute at once to the zeal and gentleness of our master, which none ever deserved more truly from his pupils than Mr. Whyte, and which the writer of these pages, who owes to that excellent person all the instructions in English literature he has ever received, is happy to take this opportunity of paying. The young Sheridans, however, were little more than a year under his care—and it may be consoling to parents who are in the first crisis of impatience, at the sort of hopeless stupidity which some children exhibit, to know, that the dawn of Sheridan's intellect was as dull and unpromising as its meridian day was bright; and that in the year 1759, he who, in less than thirty years afterwards, held senates enchained by his eloquence and audiences fascinated by his wit, was, by common consent both of parent and preceptor, pronounced to be "a most impenetrable dunce."

From Mr. Whyte's school the boys were removed to England, where Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan had lately gone to reside, and in the year 1762 Richard was sent to Harrow—Charles being kept at home as a fitter subject for the instructions of his father, who, by another of those calculations of poor human foresight, which the deity, called Eventus by the Romans, takes such wanton pleasure in falsifying, considered his elder son as destined to be the brighter of the two stars. At Harrow, Richard was remarkable only as a very idle, careless, but, at the same time, engaging boy, who contrived to win the affection, and even admiration, of the whole school, both masters and pupils, by the mere charm of his frank and genial manners, and by the occasional gleams of superior intellect, which broke through all the indolence and indifference of his character.

Harrow, at this time, possessed some peculiar advantages, of which a youth like Sheridan might have powerfully availed himself. At the head of the school was Doctor Robert Sumner, a man of fine talents, but unfortunately one of those who have passed away without leaving any trace behind, except in the admiring recollection of their contemporaries. His taste is said to have been of a purity almost perfect, combining what are seldom seen together, that critical judgment which is alive to the errors of genius, with the warm sensibility that deeply feels its beauties. At the same period, the distinguished scholar, Dr. Parr, who, to the massy erudition of a former age, joined all the free and enlightened intelligence of the present, was one of the under-masters of the school; and both he and Dr. Sumner endeavoured, by every method they could devise, to awaken in Sheridan a consciousness of those powers which, under all the disadvantages of indolence and carelessness, it was manifest to them that he possessed. But remonstrance and encouragement were equally thrown away upon the good-humoured but immoveable indifference of their pupil; and though there exist among Mr. Sheridan's papers some curious proofs of an industry in study for which few have ever given him credit, they are probably but the desultory efforts of a later period of his life, to recover the loss of that first precious time, whose susceptibility of instruction, as well as of pleasure, never comes again.

One of the most valuable acquisitions he derived from Harrow was that friendship, which lasted throughout his life, with Dr. Parr, —which mutual admiration very early began, and the "*idem sentire de re publicâ*," of course, not a little strengthened.

As this learned and estimable man has, within the last few weeks, left a void in the world which will not be easily filled up, I feel that it would be unjust to my readers not to give, in his own words, the particulars of Sheridan's school-days, with which he had the kindness to favour me, and to which his name gives an authenticity and interest too valuable on such a subject to be withheld:

"Dear Sir, "*Hatton, August* 3, 1818.

"With the aid of a scribe I sit down to fulfil my promise about Mr. Sheridan. There was little in his boyhood worth communication. He was inferior to many of his school-fellows in the ordinary business of a school, and I do not remember any one instance in which he distinguished himself by Latin or English composition, in prose or verse [1]. Nathaniel Halhed, one of his school-fellows, wrote well in Latin and Greek. Richard Archdall, another school-fellow, excelled in English verse. Richard

[1] It will be seen, however, though Dr. Parr was not aware of the circumstance, that Sheridan did try his talent at English verse before he left Harrow.

Sheridan aspired to no rivalry with either of them. He was at the uppermost part of the fifth form, but he never reached the sixth, and if I mistake not, he had no opportunity of attending the most difficult, and the most honourable of school business, when the Greek plays were taught —and it was the custom at Harrow to teach these at least every year. He went through his lessons in Horace, and Virgil, and Homer well enough for a time. But in the absence of the upper master, Doctor Sumner, it once fell in my way to instruct the two upper forms, and upon calling up Dick Sheridan, I fouud him not only slovenly in construing, but unusually defective in his Greek grammar. Knowing him to be a clever fellow, I did not fail to probe and to teaze him. I stated his case with great good-humour to the upper master, who was one of the best tempered men in the world; and it was agreed between us, that Richard should be called oftener and worked more severely. The varlet was not suffered to stand up in his place; but was summoned to take his station near the master's table, where the voice of no prompter could reach him; and, in this defenceless condition he was so harassed, that he at last gathered up some grammatical rules, and prepared himself for his lessons. While this tormenting process was inflicted upon him, I now and then upbraided him. But you will take notice that he did not incur any corporal punishment for his idleness: his industry was just sufficient to protect him from disgrace. All the while Sumner and I saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect. His eye, his countenance, his general manner, were striking. His answers to any common question were prompt and acute. We knew the esteem, and even admiration which, somehow or other, all his school-fellows felt for him. He was mischievous enough, but his pranks were accompanied by a sort of vivacity and cheerfulness, which delighted Sumner and myself. I had much talk with him about his apple-loft, for the supply of which all the gardens in the neighbourhood were taxed, and some of the lower boys were employed to furnish it. I threatened, but without asperity, to trace the depredators, through his associates, up to their leader. He with perfect good-humour set me at defiance, and I never could bring the charge home to him. All boys and all masters were pleased with him. I often praised him as a lad of great talents,—often exhorted him to use them well; but my exhortations were fruitless. I take for granted that his taste was silently improved, and that he knew well the little which he did know. He was removed from school too soon by his father, who was the intimate friend of Sumner, and whom I often met at his house. Sumner had a fine voice, fine ear, fine taste, and, therefore, pronunciation was frequently the favourite subject between him and Tom Sheridan. I was present at many of their discussions and disputes; and sometimes took a very active part in them,—but Richard was not present. The father, you know, was a wrong-headed, whimsical man, and, perhaps, his scanty circumstances were one of the reasons which prevented him from sending Richard to the University. He must have been aware, as Sumner and I were, that Richard's mind was not cast in any ordinary mould. I ought to have told you that Richard when a boy was a great reader of English poetry; but his exercises afforded no proof of his proficiency. In truth, he, as a boy, was quite careless about literary fame. I should suppose that his father, without any re-

gular system, polished his taste, and supplied his memory with anecdotes about our best writers in our Augustan age. The grandfather, you know, lived familiarly with Swift. I have heard of him, as an excellent scholar. His boys in Ireland once performed a Greek play, and when Sir William Jones and I were talking over this event, I determined to make the experiment in England. I selected some of my best boys, and they performed the OEdipus Tyrannus, and the Trachinians of Sophocles. I wrote some Greek Iambics to vindicate myself from the imputation of singularity, and grieved I am that I did not keep a copy of them. Milton, you may remember, recommends what I attempted.

"I saw much of Sheridan's father after the death of Sumner, and after my own removal from Harrow to Stanmer. I respected him,—he really liked me, and did me some important services, but I never met him and Richard together. I often enquired about Richard, and, from the father's answers, found they were not upon good terms,—but neither he nor I ever spoke of his son's talents but in terms of the highest praise."

In a subsequent letter Dr. Parr says :—

"I referred you to a passage in the Gentleman's Magazine, where I am represented as discovering and encouraging in Richard Sheridan those intellectual powers, which had not been discovered and encouraged by Sumner. But the statement is incorrect. We both of us discovered talents, which neither of us could bring into action while Sheridan was a school-boy. He gave us few opportunities of praise in the course of his school-business, and yet he was well aware that we thought highly of him, and anxiously wished more to be done by him than he was disposed to do.

"I once or twice met his mother,—she was quite celestial. Both her virtues and her genius were highly esteemed by Robert Sumner. I know not whether Tom Sheridan found Richard tractable in the art of speaking,—and, upon such a subject, indolence or indifference would have been resented by the father as crimes quite inexpiable. One of Richard's sisters now and then visited Harrow, and well do I remember that, in the house where I lodged, she triumphantly repeated Dryden's Ode upon St. Cecilia's Day, according to the instruction given to her by her father. Take a sample :—

> *None* but the brave,
> None but the *brave*,
> None *but* the brave deserve the fair."

Whatever may have been the zeal or the proficiency of the sister, naughty Richard, like Gallio, seemed to care nought for these things.

"In the later periods of his life Richard did not cast behind him classical reading. He spoke copiously and powerfully about Cicero. He had read, and he had understood, the four orations of Demosthenes read and taught in our public schools. He was at home in Virgil and in Horace. I cannot speak positively about Homer,—but I am very sure that he read the Iliad now and then; *not* as a professed scholar would do, critically, but with all the strong sympathies of a poet reading a poet '. Richard

' It was not one of the least of the triumphs of Sheridan's talent, to have been

did not, and could not forget what he once knew, but his path to knowledge was his own,—his steps were noiseless,—his progress was scarcely felt by himself,—his movements were rapid but irregular.

"Let me assure you that Richard, when a boy, was by no means vicious. The sources of his infirmities were a scanty and precarious allowance from the father, the want of a regular plan for some profession, and, above all, the act of throwing him upon the town, when he ought to have been pursuing his studies at the University. He would have done little among mathematicians at Cambridge;—he would have been a rake, or an idler, or a trifler, at Dublin;—but I am inclined to think that at Oxford he would have become an excellent scholar.

"I have now told you all that I know, and it amounts to very little. I am very solicitous for justice to be done to Robert Sumner. He is one of the six or seven persons among my own acquaintance, whose taste I am accustomed to consider perfect, and were he living, his admiration * * *

After giving an account of the residence of the family in France, she continues :—

"We returned to England, when I may say I first became acquainted with my brother—for faint and imperfect were my recollections of him, as might be expected from my age. I saw him; and my childish attachment revived with double force. He was handsome, not merely in the eyes of a partial sister, but generally allowed to be so. His cheeks had the glow of health, his eyes—the finest in the world—the brilliancy of genius, and were soft as a tender and affectionate heart could render them. The same playful fancy, the same sterling and innoxious wit, that was shown afterwards in his writings, cheered and delighted the family circle. I admired—I almost adored him. I would most willingly have sacrificed my life for him, as I, in some measure, proved to him at Bath, where we resided for some time, and where events that you must have heard of engaged him in a duel. My father's displeasure threatened to involve me in the denunciations against him, for committing what he considered as a crime. Yet I risked every thing, and in the event was made happy by obtaining forgiveness for my brother. * * * * You may perceive, dear sister, that very little indeed have I to say on a subject so near your heart, and near mine also. That for years I lost sight of a brother whom I loved with unabated affection—a love that neither absence or neglect could chill,—I always consider as a great misfortune."

On his leaving Harrow, where he continued till near his eighteenth year, he was brought home by his father, who, with the elder son, Charles, had lately returned from France, and taken a house in London. Here the two brothers for some time received private tuition from Mr. Lewis Ker, an Irish gentleman, who had formerly practised as a physician, but having, by loss of health, been obliged to give up his profession, supported himself by giving lessons in Latin and Mathematics. They attended also the fencing and riding-schools of Mr. Angelo, and received instructions from their father in English grammar and oratory. Of this advantage, however, it is probable, only the elder son availed himself, as Richard, who seems to have been determined to owe all his excellence to nature alone, was found as impracticable a pupil at home as at school. But, however inattentive to his studies he may have been at Harrow, it appears, from one of the letters of his school-fellow, Mr. Halhed, that, in poetry, which is usually the first exercise in which these young athletæ of intellect try their strength, he had already distinguished himself—and, in conjunction with his friend Halhed, had translated the seventh Idyl, and many of the lesser poems of Theocritus. This literary partnership was resumed soon after their departure from Harrow. In the year 1770, when Halhed was at Oxford, and Sheridan residing with his father at Bath, they entered into a correspondence (of which unluckily only Halhed's share remains),

and, with all the hope and spirit of young adventurers, began and prosecuted a variety of works together, of which none but their translation of Aristænetus ever saw the light.

There is something in the alliance between these boys peculiarly interesting. Their united ages, as Halhed boasts in one of his letters, did not amount to thirty-eight. They were both abounding in wit and spirits, and as sanguine as the consciousness of talent and youth could make them; both inspired with a taste for pleasure, and thrown upon their own resources for the means of gratifying it; both carelessly embarking, without rivalry or reserve, their venture of fame in the same bottom, and both, as Halhed discovered at last, passionately in love with the same woman.

It would have given me great pleasure to have been enabled to enliven my pages with even a few extracts from that portion of their correspondence, which, as I have just mentioned, has fallen into my hands. There is in the letters of Mr. Halhed a fresh youthfulness of style, and an unaffected vivacity of thought, which I question whether even his witty correspondent could have surpassed. As I do not, however, feel authorised to lay these letters before the world, I must only avail myself of the aid which their contents supply, towards tracing the progress of his literary partnership with Sheridan, and throwing light on a period so full of interest in the life of the latter.

Their first joint production was a farce, or rather play, in three acts, called "Jupiter," written in imitation of the burletta of Midas, whose popularity seems to have tempted into its wake a number of these musical parodies upon heathen fable. The amour of Jupiter with *Major* Amphitryon's wife, and *Sir Richard* Ixion's courtship of Juno, who substitutes *Miss Peggy Nubilis* in her place, form the subject of this ludicrous little drama, of which Halhed furnished the burlesque scenes,—while the form of a rehearsal, into which the whole is thrown, and which, as an anticipation of "The Critic," is highly curious, was suggested and managed entirely by Sheridan. The following extracts will give some idea of the humour of this trifle; and in the character of Simile the reader will at once discover a sort of dim and shadowy pre-existence of Puff:—

"*Simile.* Sir, you are very ignorant on the subject,—it is the method most in vogue.

"*O'Cul.* What! to make the music first, and then make the sense to it afterwards!

"*Sim.* Just so.

"*Monop.* What Mr. Simile says is very true, gentlemen; and there is

nothing surprising in it, if we consider now the general method of writing *plays* to *scenes*.

" *O'Cul.* Writing *plays* to *scenes*!—oh, you are joking.

" *Monop.* Not I, upon my word. Mr. Simile knows that I have frequently a complete set of scenes from Italy, and then I have nothing to do but to get some ingenious hand to write a play to them.

" *Sim.* I am your witness, Sir. Gentlemen, you perceive you know nothing about these matters.

" *O'Cul.* Why, Mr. Simile, I don't pretend to know much relating to these affairs; but what I think is this, that in this method, according to your principles, you must often commit blunders.

" *Sim.* Blunders! to be sure I must, but I always could get myself out of them again. Why, I'll tell you an instance of it.—You must know I was once a journeyman sonnet-writer to Signor Squallini. Now, his method, when seized with the *furor harmonicus* was constantly to make me sit by his side, while he was thrumming on his harpsichord, in order to make extempore verses to whatever air he should beat out to his liking. I remember, one morning, as he was in this situation, *thrum, thrum, thrum,* (*moving his fingers as if beating on the harpsichord*), striking out something prodigiously great, as he thought,—'Hah!' said he,—'hah! Mr. Simile, *thrum, thrum, thrum,* by gar, here is vary fine,—*thrum, thrum, thrum,* write me some words directly.'—I durst not interrupt him to ask on what subject, so instantly began to describe a fine morning.

> " 'Calm was the land and calm the seas,
> And calm the heaven's dome serene,
> Hush'd was the gale and hush'd the breeze;
> And not a vapour to be seen.'"

I sang it to his notes.—'Hah!' upon my word vary pritt,—*thrum, thrum, thrum,*—stay, stay,—*thrum, thrum.*—Hoa! upon my word, here it must be an adagio,—*thrum, thrum,*—oh! let it be an *Ode to Melancholy*.

" *Monop.* The Devil!—there you were puzzled sure.

" *Sim.* Not in the least,—I brought in a *cloud* in the next stanza, and matters, you see, came about at once.

" *Monop.* An excellent transition!

" *O'Cul.* Vastly ingenious indeed!

" *Sim.* Was it not? hey! it required a little command,—a little presence of mind,—but I believe we had better proceed.

" *Monop.* The sooner the better,—come, gentlemen, resume your seats.

" *Sim.* Now for it. Draw up the curtain, and (*looking at his book*) enter Sir Richard Ixion,—but stay,—zounds, Sir Richard ought to over-hear Jupiter and his wife quarrelling,—but, never mind,—these accidents have spoilt the division of my piece.—So enter Sir Richard, and look as cunning as if you had overheard them. Now for it, gentlemen,—you can't be too attentive.

Enter Sir Richard Ixion, *completely dressed, with bag, sword, etc.*

" *Ix.* 'Fore George, at logger-heads,—a lucky minute,
'Pon honour, I may make my market in it.

Dem it, my air, address, and mien must touch her,
Now out of sorts with him,—less God than butcher.
O rat the fellow,—where can all his sense lie,
To gallify the lady so immensely?
Ah! *le grand bête qu'il est!* how rude the bear is!
The world to two-pence he was ne'er at *Paris*.
Perdition stap my vitals,—now or never
I'll niggle snugly into Juno's favour.
Let's see,—(*looking in a glass*) my face,—toll loll—'twill work upon her
My person—oh, immense, upon my honour.
My eyes,—oh fie,—the naughty glass it flatters,—
Courage,—Ixion flogs the world to tatters. [*Exit Ixion.*

"*Sim.* There is a fine gentleman for you,—in the very pink of the mode, with not a single article about him his own,—his words pilfered from Magazines, his address from French valets, and his clothes not paid for.

"*Macd.* But pray, Mr. Simile, how did Ixion get into heaven?

"*Sim.* Why, Sir, what's that to any body?—perhaps by Salmoneus's Brazen Bridge, or the Giant's Mountain, or the Tower of Babel, or on Theobald's bull-dogs, or who the devil cares how?—he is there and that's enough."

* * * * * * * * * * *

"*Sim.* Now for a Phœnix of a song.

Song by JUPITER.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter Imperial,
King, Emperor, and Pope ætherial,
Master of th' Ordnance of the sky.—

"*Sim.* Z—ds, where's the ordnance? Have you forgot the pistol? (*to the Orchestra.*)

"*Orchestra* (*to some one behind the scenes*). Tom, are you not prepared?

"*Tom* (*from behind the scenes*). Yes, sir, but I flash'd in the pan a little out of time, and had I staid to prime, I should have shot a bar too late.

"*Sim.* Oh then, Jupiter, begin the song again.—We must not lose our ordnance.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter Imperial,
King, Emperor, and Pope ætherial,
Master of th' Ordnance of the sky; etc., etc.

[*Here a pistol or cracker is fired from behind the scenes.*

"*Sim.* This hint I took from Handel.—Well, how do you think we go on?

"*O'Cul.* With vast spirit,—the plot begins to thicken.

"*Sim.* Thicken! aye,—'twill be as thick as the calf of your leg presently. Well, now for the real, original, patentee Amphitryon. What, ho, Amphitryon! Amphitryon!—'tis Simile calls.—Why, where the devil is he?

Enter SERVANT.

"*Monop.* Tom, where is Amphitryon?

"*Sim.* Zounds, he's not arrested too, is he?

"*Serv.* No, Sir; but there was but *one black eye* in the house, and he is waiting to get it from Jupiter.

"*Sim.* To get a black eye from Jupiter,—oh, this will never do. Why, when they meet, they ought to match like two beef-eaters."

According to their original plan for the conclusion of this farce, all things were at last to be compromised between Jupiter and Juno; Amphitryon was to be comforted in the birth of so mighty a son; Ixion, for his presumption, instead of being fixed to a *torturing* wheel, was to have been fixed to a vagrant monotroche, as knife-grinder, and a grand chorus of deities (intermixed with "knives, scissors, pen-knives to grind," set to music as nearly as possible to the natural cry,) would have concluded the whole.

That habit of dilatoriness, which is too often attendant upon genius, and which is for ever making it, like the pistol in the scene just quoted, "shoot a bar too late," was, through life, remarkable in the character of Mr. Sheridan,—and we have here an early instance of its influence over him. Though it was in August, 1770, that he received the sketch of this piece from his friend, and though they both looked forward most sanguinely to its success, as likely to realize many a dream of fame and profit, it was not till the month of May in the subsequent year, as appears by a letter from Mr. Ker to Sheridan, that the probability of the arrival of the manuscript was announced to Mr. Foote. "I have dispatched a card, as from H. H., at Owen's Coffee-house, to Mr. Foote, to inform him that he may expect to see your dramatic piece about the 25th instant."

Their hopes and fears in this theatrical speculation are very naturally and livelily expressed throughout Halhed's letters, sometimes with a degree of humorous pathos, which is interesting as characteristic of both the writers:—"The thoughts," he says, "of 200*l.* shared between us are enough to bring the tears into one's eyes."

Sometimes, he sets more moderate limits to their ambition, and hopes that they will, at least, get the freedom of the play-house by it. But at all times he chides, with good-humoured impatience, the tardiness of his fellow-labourer in applying to the managers. Fears are expressed that Foote may have made other engagements,—and that a piece, called "Dido," on the same mythological plan, which had lately been produced with but little success, might prove an obstacle to the reception of theirs. At Drury Lane, too, they had little hopes of a favourable hearing, as Dibdin was one of the principal butts of their ridicule.

The summer season, however, was suffered to pass away without an effort; and in October, 1771, we find Mr. Halhed flattering himself with hopes from a negotiation with Mr. Garrick. It does not appear, however, that Sheridan ever actually presented this piece to any of the managers; and indeed it is probable, from the following fragment of a scene found among his papers, that he soon abandoned the ground-work of Halhed altogether, and transferred his plan of a rehearsal to some other subject, of his own invention and, therefore, more worthy of his wit. It will be perceived that the puffing author was here intended to be a Scotchman.

"*M.* Sir, I have read your comedy, and I think it has infinite merit; but, pray, don't you think it rather grave?

"*S.* Sir, you say true; it *is* a grave comedy. I follow the opinion of Longinus who says comedy ought always to be sentimental. Sir, I value, a sentiment of six lines in my piece no more than a nabob does a rupee. I hate those dirty, paltry equivocations, which go by the name of puns, and pieces of wit. No, Sir, it ever was my opinion that the stage should be a place of rational entertainment; instead of which, I am very sorry to say, most people go there for their diversion: accordingly, I have formed my comedy so that it is no laughing, giggling piece of work. He must be a very light man that shall discompose his muscles from the beginning to the end.

"*M.* But don't you think it may be too grave?

"*S.* O never fear; and as for hissing, mon, they might as well hiss the common prayer-book; for there is the viciousness of vice and the virtuousness of virtue in every third line.

"*M.* I confess there is a great deal of moral in it; but, Sir, I should imagine if you tried your hand at tragedy—

"*S.* No, mon, there you are out, and I'll relate to you what put me first on writing a comedy. You must know I had composed a very fine tragedy about the valiant Bruce. I showed it my Laird of Mackintosh, and he was a very candid mon, and he said my genius did not lie in tragedy: I took the hint, and, as soon as I got home, began my comedy."

We have here some of the very thoughts and words that afterwards contributed to the fortune of Puff; and it is amusing to observe how long this subject was played with by the current of Sheridan's fancy, till at last, like "a stone of lustre from the brook," it came forth with all that smoothness and polish which it wears in his inimitable farce, The Critic. Thus it is, too, and but little to the glory of what are called our years of discretion, that the life of the *man* is chiefly employed in giving effect to the wishes and plans of the *boy*.

Another of their projects was a Periodical Miscellany, the idea of which originated with Sheridan, and whose first embryo movements we trace in a letter to him from Mr. Lewis Ker, who undertook with much good nature the negotiation of the young author's literary

concerns in London. The letter is dated 30th of October, 1770.—"As to your intended periodical paper, if it meets with success, there is no doubt of profit accruing, as I have already engaged a publisher of established reputation to undertake it for the account of the authors. But I am to indemnify him in case it should not sell, and to advance part of the first expense, all which I can do without applying to Mr. Ewart."—"I would be glad to know what stock of papers you have already written, as there ought to be ten or a dozen at least finished before you print any, in order to have time to prepare the subsequent numbers, and ensure a continuance of the work. As to the coffee-houses, you must not depend on their taking it in at first, except you go on the plan of the Tatler, and give the news of the week. For the first two or three weeks the expense of advertising will certainly prevent any profit being made. But when that is over, if a thousand are sold weakly, you may reckon on receiving 5*l.* clear. One paper a-week will do better than two. Pray say no more as to our accounts."

The title intended by Sheridan for this paper was "Hernan's Miscellany," to which his friend Halhed objected, and suggested "The Reformer," as a newer and more significant name. But, though Halhed appears to have sought among his Oxford friends for an auxiliary or two in their weekly labours, this meditated Miscellany never proceeded beyond the first number, which was written by Sheridan, and which I have found among his papers. It is too diffuse and pointless to be given entire; but an extract or two from it will not be unwelcome to those who love to trace even the first, feeblest beginnings of genius.

HERNAN'S MISCELLANY.

No. I.

"I will sit down and write for the good of the people—for (said I to myself, pulling off my spectacles, and drinking up the remainder of my sixpen'worth) it cannot be but people must be sick of these same rascally politics. All last winter nothing but—God defend me! 'tis tiresone to think of it.' I immediately flung the pamphlet down on the table, and taking my hat and cane walked out of the coffee-house.

"I kept up as smart a pace as I could all the way home, for I felt myself full of something, and enjoyed my own thoughts so much, that I was afraid of digesting them, lest any should escape me. At last I knocked at my own door.—'So!' said I to the maid who opened it (for I never would keep a man; not, but what I could afford it—however, the reason is not material now,) 'So!' said I with an unusual smile upon my face, and immediately sent her for a quire of paper and half a hundred of pens—the only thing I had absolutely determined on in my way from the coffee-house. I had now got seated in my arm-chair,—I am an infirm

old man, and I live on a second floor,—when I began to ruminate on my project. The first thing that occurred to me (and certainly a very natural one) was to examine my common-place book. So I went to my desk and took out my old faithful red-leather companion, who had long discharged the office of treasurer to all my best hints and memorandums: but, how was I surprised when one of the first things that struck my eyes was the following memorandum legibly written, and on one of my best sheets of vellum:—'Mem.—*Oct. 20th, 1769, left the Grecian, after having read——'s Poems, with a determined resolution to write a Periodical Paper, in order to reform the vitiated taste of the age; but coming home and finding my fire out, and my maid gone abroad, was obliged to defer the execution of my plan to another opportunity.*' Now though this event had absolutely slipped my memory, I now recollected it perfectly,—ay, so my fire *was* out indeed, and my maid *did* go abroad sure enough.—'Good Heavens!' said I, 'how great events depend upon little circumstances!' However, I looked upon this as a memento for me no longer to trifle away my time and resolution, and thus I began to reason,—I mean, I *would* have reasoned, had I not been interrupted by a noise of some one coming up stairs. By the alternate thump upon the steps, I soon discovered it must be my old and intimate friend Rudliche.

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"But, to return, in walked Rudliche.—'So, Fred.'—'So, Bob.'—'Were you at the Grecian to-day?'—'I just stepped in.'—'Well, any news?' No, no, there was no news.'—Now, as Bob and I saw one another almost every day, we seldom abounded in conversation; so, having settled one material point, he sat in his usual posture, looking at the fire and beating the dust out of his wooden leg, when I perceived he was going to touch upon *the* other subject; but, having by chance cast his eye on my face, and finding (I suppose) something extraordinary in my countenance, he immediately dropped all concern for the weather, and putting his hand into his pocket (as if he meant to find what he was going to say, under pretence of feeling for his tobacco-box), 'Hernan! (he began) why, man, you look for all the world as if you had been thinking of something.'—'Yes,' replied I, smiling (that is, not actually smiling, but with a conscious something in my face), 'I have, indeed, been thinking a little.'—'What, is't a secret?'—'Oh, nothing very material.' Here ensued a pause, which I employed in considering whether I should reveal my scheme to Bob; and Bob in trying to disengage his thumb from the string of his cane, as if he were preparing to take his leave. This latter action, with the great desire I had of disburthening myself, made me instantly resolve to lay my whole plan before him. 'Bob, said I (he immediately quitted his thumb), you remarked that I looked as if I had been thinking of something,—your remark is just, and I'll tell you the subject of my thought. You know, Bob, that I always had a strong passion for literature:—you have often seen my collection of books, not very large indeed; however I believe I have read every volume of it twice over (excepting——'*s Divine Legation of Moses*, and——'*s Lives of the most notorious Malefactors*), and I am now determined to profit by them.' I concluded with a very significant nod;—but, good heavens! how mortified was I to find both my speech and my nod thrown away,

when Rudliche calmly replied, with the true phlegm of ignorance, 'My dear friend, I think your resolution in regard to your books a very prudent one; but I do not perfectly conceive your plan as to the *profit*; for, though your volumes may be very curious, yet you know they are most of them second-hand.'—I was so vexed with the fellow's stupidity that I had a great mind to punish him by not disclosing a syllable more. However, at last my vanity got the better of my resentment, and I explained to him the whole matter. * * * * * * * * *

"In examining the beginning of the Spectators, etc. I find they are all written by a society.—Now I profess to write all myself, though I acknowledge that, on account of a weakness in my eyes, I have got some under-strappers who are to write the poetry, etc. . . . In order to find the different merits of these my subalterns, I stipulated with them that they should let me feed them as I would. This they consented to do, and it is surprising to think what different effects diet has on the writers. The same who, after having been fed two days upon artichokes, produced as pretty a copy of verses as ever I saw, on beef was as dull as ditchwater. * * * * * *"

"It is a characteristic of fools," says some one, "to be always beginning,"—and this is not the only point in which folly and genius resemble each other. So chillingly indeed do the difficulties of execution succeed to the first ardour of conception, that it is only wonderful there should exist so many finished monuments of genius, or that men of fancy should not oftener have contented themselves with those first, vague sketches, in the production of which the chief luxury of intellectual creation lies. Among the many literary works shadowed out by Sheridan at this time, were a Collection of Occasional Poems, and a volume of Crazy Tales,—to the former of which Halhed suggests, that "the old things they did at Harrow out of Theocritus" might, with a little pruning, form a useful contribution. The loss of the volume of Crazy Tales is little to be regretted, as from its title we may conclude it was written in imitation of the clever, but licentious productions of John Hall Stephenson. If the same kind oblivion had closed over the levities of other young authors, who, in the season of folly and the passions, have made their pages the transcript of their lives, it would have been equally fortunate for themselves and the world.

But, whatever may have been the industry of these youthful authors, the translation of Aristænetus, as I have already stated, was the only fruit of their literary alliance that ever arrived at sufficient maturity for publication. In November, 1770, Halhed had completed and forwarded to Bath his share of the work, and in the following month we find Sheridan preparing, with the assistance of a Greek grammar, to complete the task. "The 29th ult. (says Mr. Ker, in a letter to him from London, dated Dec. 4, 1770), I

was favoured with yours, and have since been hunting for Aristænetus, whom I found this day, and therefore send to you, together with a Greek grammar. I might have dispatched at the same time some numbers of the Dictionary, but not having got the two last numbers, was not willing to send any without the whole of what is published, and still less willing to delay Aristænetus's journey by waiting for them." The work alluded to here is the Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, to which Sheridan had subscribed, with the view, no doubt, of informing himself upon subjects of which he was as yet wholly ignorant; having left school, like most other young men at his age, as little furnished with the knowledge that is wanted in the world, as a person would be for the demands of a market, who went into it with nothing but a few ancient coins in his pocket.

The passion, however, that now began to take possession of his heart was little favourable to his advancement in any serious studies; and it may easily be imagined that, in the neighbourhood of Miss Linley, the Arts and Sciences were suffered to sleep quietly on their shelves. Even the translation of Aristænetus, though a task more suited, from its amatory nature, to the existing temperature of his heart, was proceeded in but slowly; and it appears from one of Halhed's letters that this impatient ally was already counting upon the *spolia opima* of the campaign, before Sheridan had fairly brought his Greek grammar into the field. The great object of the former was a visit to Bath; and he had set his heart still more anxiously upon it after a second meeting with Miss Linley at Oxford. But the profits expected from their literary undertakings were the only means to which he looked for the realising of this dream; and he accordingly implores his friend, with the most comic piteousness, to drive the farce on the stage by main force, and to make Aristænetus sell whether he will or not. In the November of this year we find them discussing the propriety of prefixing their names to the work—Sheridan evidently not disinclined to venture, but Halhed recommending that they should wait to hear how "Sumner and the wise few of their acquaintance" would talk of the book, before they risked any thing more than their initials. In answer to Sheridan's enquiries as to the extent of sale they may expect in Oxford, he confesses that, after three coffee-houses had bought one a-piece, not two more would be sold.

That poverty is the best nurse of talent has long been a most humiliating truism; and the fountain of the Muses, bursting from a barren rock, is but too apt an emblem of the hard source from which much of the genius of this world has issued. How strongly the young translators of Aristænetus were under the influence of this sort of inspiration appears from every paragraph of Halhed's letters,

and might easily, indeed, be concluded of Sheridan from the very limited circumstances of his father—who had nothing beside the pension of 200*l.* a-year, conferred upon him in consideration of his literary merits, and the little profits he derived from his lectures in Bath, to support with decency himself and his family. The prospects of Halhed were much more golden, but he was far too gay and mercurial to be prudent; and from the very scanty supplies which his father allowed him, had quite as little of "le superflu, chose si nécessaire," as his friend. But whatever were his other desires and pursuits, a visit to Bath,—to that place which contained the two persons he most valued in friendship and in love,—was the grand object of all his financial speculations; and among other ways and means that, in the delay of the expected resources from Aristænetus, presented themselves, was an exhibition of 20*l.* a-year, which the college had lately given him, and with five pounds of which he thought he might venture "adire Corinthum."

Though Sheridan had informed his friend that the translation was put to press some time in March, 1771, it does not appear to have been given into the hands of Wilkie, the publisher, till the beginning of May, when Mr. Ker writes thus to Bath: "Your Aristænetus is in the hands of Mr. Wilkie, in St. Paul's Church-yard, and to put you out of suspense at once, will certainly make his appearance about the 1st of June next, in the form of a neat volume, price 3*s.* or 3*s.* 6*d.*, as may best suit his size, etc., which cannot be more nearly determined at present. I have undertaken the task of correcting for the press.... Some of the Epistles that I have perused seem to me elegant and poetical; in others I could not observe equal beauty, and here and there I could wish there were some little amendment. You will pardon this liberty I take, and set it down to the account of old-fashioned friendship." Mr. Ker, to judge from his letters (which, in addition to their other laudable points, are dated with a precision truly exemplary), was a very kind, useful, and sensible person, and in the sober hue of his intellect exhibited a striking contrast, to the sparkling vivacity of the two sanguine and impatient young wits, whose affairs he so good-naturedly undertook to negotiate.

At length in August, 1771, Aristænetus made its appearance—contrary to the advice of the bookseller, and of Mr. Ker, who represented to Sheridan the unpropitiousness of the season, particularly for a first experiment in authorship, and advised the postponement of the publication till October. But the translators were too eager for the rich harvest of emolument they had promised themselves, and too full of that pleasing but often fatal delusion—that calenture, under the influence of which young voyagers to the

shores of Fame imagine they already see her green fields and groves in the treacherous waves around them—to listen to the suggestions of mere calculating men of business. The first account they heard of the reception of the work was flattering enough to prolong awhile this dream of vanity. "It begins (writes Mr. Ker, in about a fortnight after the publication,) to make some noise, and is fathered on Mr. Johnson, author of the English Dictionary, etc. See to-day's Gazetteer. The critics are admirable in discovering a concealed author by his style, manner, etc."

Their disappointment at the ultimate failure of the book was proportioned, we may suppose, to the sanguineness of their first expectations. But the reluctance, with which an author yields to the sad certainty of being unread, is apparent in the eagerness with which Halhed avails himself of every encouragement for a rally of his hopes. The Critical Reviewers, it seems, had given the work a tolerable character, and quoted the first Epistle [1]. The Weekly Review in the Public Ledger had also spoken well of it, and cited a specimen. The Oxford Magazine had transcribed two whole Epistles, without mentioning from whence they were taken. Every body, he says, seemed to have read the book, and one of those *hawking booksellers*, who attend the coffee-houses, assured him it was written by Dr. Armstrong, author of the OEconomy of Love. On the strength of all this he recommends that another volume of the Epistles should be published immediately—being of opinion that the readers of the first volume would be sure to purchase the second, and that the publication of the second would put it in the heads of others to buy the first. Under a sentence containing one of these sanguine anticipations, there is written, in Sheridan's hand, the word "Quixote!"

They were never, of course, called upon for the second part, and, whether we consider the merits of the original or of the translation, the world has but little to regret in the loss. Aristænetus is one of those weak, florid sophists who flourished in the decline and degradation of ancient literature, and strewed their gaudy flowers of rhetoric over the dead muse of Greece. He is evidently of a much later period than Alciphron, to whom he is also very inferior in purity of diction, variety of subject, and playfulness of irony. But neither of them ever deserved to be wakened from that

[1] In one of the Reviews I have seen it is thus spoken of:—"No such writer as Aristænetus ever existed in the classic æra; nor did even the unhappy schools, after the destruction of the Eastern empire, produce such a writer. It was left to the latter times of monkish imposition to give such trash as this, on which the translator has ill spent his time. We have been as idly employed in reading it, and our readers will in proportion lose their time in perusing this article."

sleep, in which the commentaries of Bergler, De Pauw, and a few more such industrious scholars have shrouded them.

The translators of Aristænetus, in rendering his flowery prose into verse, might have found a precedent and model for their task in Ben Jonson, whose popular song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," is, as Mr. Cumberland first remarked, but a piece of fanciful mosaic, collected out of the love-letters of the sophist Philostratus. But many of the narrations in Aristænetus are incapable of being elevated into poetry; and, unluckily, these familiar parts seem chiefly to have fallen to the department of Halhed, who was far less gifted than his coadjutor with that artist-like touch, which polishes away the mark of vulgarity, and gives an air of elegance even to poverty. As the volume is not in many hands, the following extract from one of the Epistles may be acceptable—as well from the singularity of the scene described, as from the specimen it affords of the merits of the translation:

"Listen—another pleasure I display,
That help'd delightfully the time away.
From distant vales, where bubbles from its source
A crystal rill, they dug a winding course:
See! thro' the grove a narrow lake extends,
Crosses each plot, to each plantation bends;
And while the fount in new meanders glides,
The forest brightens with refreshing tides.
Tow'rds us they taught the new-born stream to flow,
Tow'rds us it crept, irresolute and slow:
Scarce had the infant current trickled by,
When lo! a wondrous fleet attracts our eye;
Laden with draughts might greet a monarch's tongue,
The mimic navigation swam along.
Hasten, ye ship-like goblets, down the vale,
Your freight a flagon, and a leaf your sail.
O may no envious rush thy course impede,
Or floating apple stop thy tide-borne speed.
His mildest breath a gentle zephyr gave;
The little vessels trimly stemm'd the wave:
Their precious merchandise to land they bore,
And one by one resign'd the balmy store.
Stretch but a hand, we boarded them, and quaff
With native luxury the temper'd draught.
For where they loaded the nectareous fleet,
The goblet glow'd with too intense a heat;
Cool'd by degrees in these convivial ships,
With nicest taste it met our thirsty lips."

[1] "In the original, this luxurious image is pursued so far that the very leaf, which is represented as the sail of the vessel, is particularised as of a medicinal nature, capable of preventing any ill effects the wine might produce."—*Note by the Translator.*

As a scholar such as Halhed could hardly have been led into the mistake of supposing τὸ Μηδικὸν φυτὸν φύλλον to mean "a leaf of a medicinal nature," we may perhaps, from this circumstance not less than from the superior workmanship of the verses, attribute the whole of this Epistle and notes to Sheridan.

There is another Epistle, the 12th, as evidently from the pen of his friend, the greater part of which is original, and shows, by its raciness and vigour, what difference there is between "the first sprightly runnings" of an author's own mind, and his cold, vapid transfusion of the thoughts of another. From stanza 10th to the end is all added by the translator, and all spirited—though full of a bold, defying libertinism, as unlike as possible to the effeminate lubricity of the poor sophist, upon whom, in a grave, treacherous note, the responsibility of the whole is laid. But by far the most interesting part of the volume is the last Epistle of the book, "From a Lover resigning his Mistress to his Friend,"—in which Halhed has contrived to extract from the unmeaningness of the original a direct allusion to his own fate; and, forgetting Aristænetus and his dull personages, thinks only of himself, and Sheridan, and Miss Linley.

"Thee, then, my friend,—if yet a wretch may claim
A last attention by that once dear name,—
Thee I address:—the cause you must approve;
I yield you—what I cannot cease to love.
Be thine the blissful lot, the nymph be thine:
I yield my love,—sure, friendship may be mine.
Yet must no thought of me torment thy breast;
Forget me, if my griefs disturb thy rest,
Whilst still I'll pray that thou may'st never know
The pangs of baffled love, or feel my woe.
But sure to thee, dear, charming—fatal maid!
(For me thou'st charm'd, and me thou hast betray'd,)
This last request I need not recommend—
Forget the lover thou, as he the friend.
Bootless such charge! for ne'er did pity move
A heart that mock'd the suit of humble love.
Yet, in some thoughtful hour—if such can be,
Where love, Timocrates, is join'd with thee—
In some lone pause of joy, when pleasures pall,
And fancy broods o'er joys it can't recall,
Haply a thought of me (for thou, my friend,
May'st then have taught that stubborn heart to bend),
A thought of him, whose passion was not weak,
May dash one transient blush upon her cheek;
Haply a tear—(for I shall surely then
Be past all power to raise her scorn again—)
Haply, I say, one self-dried tear may fall:—
One tear she'll give, for whom I yielded all!
* * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * *

My life has lost its aim!—that fatal fair
Was all its object, all its hope or care:
She was the goal to which my course was bent,
Where every wish, where every thought was sent;
A secret influence darted from her eyes,—
Each look, attraction, and herself the prize.
Concentred these, I liv'd for her alone;
To make her glad and to be blest was one.
* * * * * * * * * * *

Adieu, my friend,—nor blame this *sad* adieu,
Though sorrow guides my pen, it blames not you.
Forget me—'tis my prayer; nor seek to know
The fate of him whose portion must be woe,
Till the cold earth outstretch her friendly arms,
And Death convince me that he *can* have charms."

But Halhed's was not the only heart, that sighed deeply and hopelessly for the young Maid of Bath, who appears, indeed, to have spread her gentle conquests to an extent almost unparalleled in the annals of beauty. Her personal charms, the exquisiteness of her musical talents, and the full light of publicity which her profession threw upon both, naturally attracted round her a crowd of admirers, in whom the sympathy of a common pursuit soon kindled into rivalry, till she became at length an object of vanity as well as of love. Her extreme youth, too,—for she was little more than sixteen when Sheridan first met her,—must have removed, even from minds the most fastidious and delicate, that repugnance they might justly have felt to her profession, if she had lived much longer under its tarnishing influence, or lost, by frequent exhibitions before the public, that fine gloss of feminine modesty, for whose absence not all the talents and accomplishments of the whole sex can atone.

She had been, even at this early age, on the point of marriage with Mr. Long, an old gentleman of considerable fortune in Wiltshire, who proved the reality of his attachment to her in a way which few young lovers would be romantic enough to imitate. On her secretly representing to him that she never could be happy as his wife, he generously took upon himself the whole blame of breaking off the alliance, and even indemnified the father, who was proceeding to bring the transaction into court, by settling 3000*l.* upon his daughter. Mr. Sheridan, who owed to this liberal conduct not only the possession of the woman he loved, but the means of supporting her during the first years of their marriage, spoke invariably of Mr. Long, who lived to a very advanced age, with all the kindness and respect which such a disinterested character merited.

It was about the middle of the year 1770 that the Sheridans took

up their residence in King's Mead [1] Street, Bath, where an acquaintance commenced between them and Mr. Linley's family, which the kindred tastes of the young people soon ripened into intimacy. It was not to be expected,—though parents, in general, are as blind to the first approach of these dangers, as they are rigid and unreasonable after they have happened,—that such youthful poets and musicians [2] should come together, without Love very soon making one of the party. Accordingly, the two brothers became deeply enamoured of Miss Linley. Her heart, however, was not so wholly unpreoccupied, as to yield at once to the passion which her destiny had in store for her. One of those transient preferences, which in early youth are mistaken for love, had already taken lively possession of her imagination; and to this the following lines, written at that time by Mr. Sheridan, allude :—

To the Recording Angel.

Cherub of Heaven, that from thy secret stand
Dost note the follies of each mortal here,
Oh! if Eliza's steps employ thy hand,
Blot the sad legend with a mortal tear.
Nor, when she errs, through passion's wild extreme,
Mark then her course, nor heed each trifling wrong;
Nor, when her sad attachment is her theme,
Note down the transports of her erring tongue.
But, when she sighs for sorrows not her own,
Let that dear sigh to Mercy's cause be given;
And bear that tear to her Creator's throne
Which glistens in the eye upraised to Heaven?

But in love, as in every thing else, the power of a mind like Sheridan's must have made itself felt through all obstacles and difficulties. He was not long in winning the entire affections of the young "Syren,"—though the number and wealth of his rivals, the ambitious views of her father, and the temptations to which she herself was hourly exposed, kept his jealousies and fears perpetually on the watch. He is supposed, indeed, to have been indebted to self-observation for that portrait of a wayward and morbidly sensitive lover, which he has drawn so strikingly in the character of Falkland.

With a mind in this state of feverish wakefulness, it is remarkable that he should so long have succeeded in concealing his attachment from the eyes of those most interested in discovering it. Even his

[1] They also lived, during a part of their stay at Bath, in New King-Street.

[2] Dr. Burney, in his Biographical Sketch of Mr. Linley, written for Rees's Cyclopædia, calls the Linley family "a nest of nightingales." The only surviving member of this accomplished family is Mr. William Linley, whose taste and talent, both in poetry and music, most worthily sustain the reputation of the name that he bears.

brother Charles was for some time wholly unaware of their rivalry, —and went on securely indulging in a passion which it was hardly possible, with such opportunities of intercourse, to resist, and which survived long after Miss Linley's selection of another had extinguished every hope in his heart but that of seeing her happy. Halhed, too, who at that period corresponded constantly with Sheridan, and confided to him the love with which he also had been inspired by this enchantress, was for a length of time left in the same darkness upon the subject, and without the slightest suspicion that the epidemic had reached his friend—whose only mode of evading the many tender enquiries and messages, with which Halhed's letters abounded, was by referring to answers which had, by some strange fatality, miscarried, and which we may conclude, without much uncharitableness, had never been written.

Miss Linley went frequently to Oxford, to perform at the oratorios and concerts; and it may easily be imagined that the ancient allegory of the Muses throwing chains over Cupid was here reversed, and the quiet shades of learning not a little disturbed by the splendour of these "angel visits." The letters of Halhed give a lively idea, not only of his own intoxication, but of the sort of contagious delirium, like that at Abdera described by Lucian, with which the young men of Oxford were affected by this beautiful girl. In describing her singing he quotes part of a Latin letter, which he himself had written to a friend upon first hearing her; and it is a curious proof of the readiness of Sheridan, notwithstanding his own fertility, to avail himself of the thoughts of others, that we find in this extract, word for word, the same extravagant comparison of the effects of music to the process of Egyptian embalmment—"extracting the brain through the ears"—which was afterwards transplanted into the dialogue of the Duenna:—"*Mortuum quendam ante Ægypti medici quam pollincirent cerebella de auribus unco quodam hamo solebant extrahere; sic de meis auribus non cerebrum, sed cor ipsum exhausit lusciniola, etc., etc.*" He mentions, as the rivals most dreaded by her admirers, Norris, the singer, whose musical talents, it was thought, recommended him to her, and Mr. Watts, a gentleman-commoner, of very large fortune.

While all hearts and tongues were thus occupied about Miss Linley, it is not wonderful that rumours of matrimony and elopement should, from time to time, circulate among her apprehensive admirers; or that the usual ill-compliment should be paid to her sex of supposing that wealth must be the winner of the prize. It was at one moment currently reported at Oxford that she had gone off to Scotland with a young man of 3000*l.* a-year, and the panic which

the intelligence spread is described in one of these letters to Sheridan (who no doubt shared in it) as producing "long faces" every where. Not only, indeed, among her numerous lovers, but among all who delighted in her public performances, an alarm would naturally be felt at the prospect of her becoming private property;—

> "*Te juga Taygeti, posito te Mænala flebunt*
> *Venatu, mœstoque diu lugebere Cyntho.*
> *Delphica quinetiam fratris delubra tacebunt* [1]."
>
> Thee, thee, when hurried from our eyes away,
> Laconia's hills shall mourn for many a day—
> The Arcadian hunter shall forget his chace,
> And turn aside, to think upon that face;
> While many an hour Apollo's songless shrine
> Shall wait in silence for a voice like thine!

But, to the honour of her sex, which is, in general, more disinterested than the other, it was found that neither rank nor wealth had influenced her heart in its election; and Halhed, who, like others, had estimated the strength of his rivals by their rent-rolls, discovered at last that his unpretending friend, Sheridan (whose advances in courtship and in knowledge seem to have been equally noiseless and triumphant), was the chosen favourite of her at whose feet so many fortunes lay. Like that Saint, Cecilia, by whose name she was always called, she had long welcomed to her soul a secret visitant [2], whose gifts were of a higher and more radiant kind, than the mere wealthy and lordly of this world can proffer. A letter, written by Halhed on the prospect of his departure for India [3], alludes so delicately to this discovery, and describes the state of his own heart so mournfully, that I must again, in parting with him and his correspondence, express the strong regret that I feel, at not being able to indulge the reader with a perusal of these letters. Not only as a record of the first short flights of Sheridan's genius, but as a picture, from the life, of the various feelings of youth, its desires and fears, its feverish hopes and fanciful melancholy, they could not have failed to be read with the deepest interest.

To this period of Mr. Sheridan's life we are indebted for most of those elegant love-verses, which are so well known and so often quoted. The lines "Uncouth is this moss-covered grotto of stone,"

[1] Claudian. De Rapt. Proserp. Lib. ii. v. 244.

[2] "The youth, found in her chamber, had in his hand two crowns or wreaths, the one of lilies, the other of roses, which he had brought from Paradise."—*Legend of St. Cecilia.*

[3] The letter is evidently in answer to one which he had just received from Sheridan, in which Miss Linley had written a few words, expressive of her wishes for his health and happiness. Mr. Halhed sailed for India about the latter end of this year.

were addressed to Miss Linley, after having offended her by one of those lectures upon decorum of conduct, which jealous lovers so frequently inflict upon their mistresses,—and the grotto, immortalized by their quarrel, is supposed to have been in Spring Gardens, then the fashionable place of resort in Bath.

I have elsewhere remarked that the conceit in the following stanza resembles a thought in some verses of Angerianus :—

> And thou, stony grot, in thy arch may'st preserve
> Two lingering drops of the night-fallen dew,
> Let them fall on her bosom of snow, and they'll serve
> As tears of my sorrow entrusted to you.
>
> *At quum per niveam cervicem influxerit humor*
> *Dicite non roris sed pluvia hæc lacrimæ.*

Whether Sheridan was likely to have been a reader of Angerianus is, I think, doubtful—at all events the coincidence is curious.

"Dry be that tear, my gentlest love," is supposed to have been written at a later period; but it was most probably produced at the time of his courtship, for he wrote but few love-verses after his marriage—like the nigtingale (as a French editor of Bonefonious says, in remarking a similar circumstance of that poet) "qui développe le charme de sa voix tant qu'il veut plaire à sa compagne — sont-ils unis? il se tait, il n'a plus le besoin de lui plaire." This song having been hitherto printed incorrectly, I shall give it here, as it is in the copies preserved by his relations.

> Dry be that tear, my gentlest love[1],
> Be hush'd that struggling sigh,
> Nor seasons, day, nor fate shall prove
> More fix'd, more true than I.
> Hush'd be that sigh, be dry that tear,
> Cease boding doubt, cease anxious fear.—
> Dry be that tear.
>
> Ask'st thou how long my love will stay,
> When all that 's new is past?—
> How long, ah Delia, can I say
> How long my life will last?
> Dry be that tear, be hush'd that sigh,
> At least I'll love thee till I die.—
> Hush'd be that sigh.
>
> And does that thought affect thee too,
> The thought of Sylvio's death,
> That he who only breath'd for you,
> Must yield that faithful breath?

[1] An Elegy by Halhed, transcribed in one of his letters to Sheridan, begins thus:

"Dry be that tear, be hush'd that struggling sigh."

Hush'd be that sigh, be dry that tear,
Nor let us lose our Heaven here.—
Dry be that tear.

There is in the second stanza here a close resemblance to one of the madrigals of Montreuil, a French poet, to whom Sir J. Moore was indebted for the point of his well known verses, "If in that breast, so good, so pure [1]." Mr. Sheridan, however, knew nothing of French, and neglected every opportunity of learning it, till, by a very natural process, his ignorance of the language grew into hatred of it. Besides, we have the immediate source from which he derived the thought of this stanza, in one of the Essays of Hume, who, being a reader of foreign literature, most probably found it in Montreuil [2]. The passage in Hume (which Sheridan has done little more than versify) is as follows: — "Why so often ask me, *How long my love shall yet endure?* Alas, my Cælia, can I resolve the question? *Do I know how long my life shall yet endure* [3]?

The pretty lines, "Mark'd you her cheek of rosy hue?" were written, not upon Miss Linley as has been generally stated, but upon lady Margaret Fordice, and form part of a poem which he published in 1771, descriptive of the principal beauties of Bath, entitled "Clio's Protest, or the Picture Varnished,"—being an answer to some verses by Mr. Miles Peter Andrews, called "The Bath Picture," in which Lady Margaret was thus introduced:

"Remark too the dimpling, sweet smile
Lady Marg'ret's fine countenance wears."

The following is the passage in Mr. Sheridan's poem, entire; and the beauty of the six favourite lines shines out so conspicuously, that

The grief, that on my quiet preys,
That rends my heart and checks my tongue,
I fear will last me all my days,
And feel it will not last me long.

It is thus in Montreuil:—

C'est un mal que j'aurai tout le temps de ma vie;
Mais je ne l'aurai pas long-temps.

[1] Or in an Italian song of Menage, from which Montreuil, who was accustomed to such thefts, most probably stole it. The point in the Italian is, as far as I can remember it, expressed thus:—

In van, o Filli, tu chiedi
Se lungamente durera l'ardore
* * * * * * *
Chi lo potrebbe dire?
Incerta, o Filli, e l' ora del morire.

[2] The Epicurean.

we cannot wonder at their having been so soon detached, like ill set gems, from the loose and clumsy workmanship around them.

"But, hark!—did not our bard repeat
The love-born name of M-rg-r-t?—
Attention seizes every ear;
We pant for the description *here*:—
'If ever dulness left thy brow,
'*Pindar*,' we say, 'twill leave thee now.'
But O! old Dulness' son anointed
His mother never disappointed!—
And here we all were left to seek
A dimple in F-rd-ce's cheek!

"And could you really discover,
In gazing those sweet beauties over,
No other charm, no winning grace,
Adorning either mind or face,
But one poor *dimple*, to express
The *quintessence* of *loveliness*?
.... Mark'd you her cheek of rosy hue?
Mark'd you her eye of sparkling blue?
That eye, in liquid circles moving;
That cheek abash'd at Man's approving;
The *one*, Love's arrows darting round;
The *other*, blushing at the wound:
Did she not speak, did she not move,
Now *Pallas*—now the Queen of Love!"

There is little else in this poem worth being extracted, though it consists of about four hundred lines;—except, perhaps, his picture of a good country house-wife, which affords an early specimen of that neat pointedness of phrase, which gave his humour, both poetic and dramatic, such a peculiar edge and polish:—

"We see the Dame, in rustic pride,
A bunch of keys to grace her side,
Stalking across the well-swept entry,
To hold her council in the pantry;
Or, with prophetic soul, foretelling
The peas will boil well by the shelling;
Or, bustling in her private closet,
Prepare her lord his morning posset;
And, while the hallow'd mixture thickens,
Signing death-warrants for the chickens:
Else, greatly pensive, poring o'er
Accounts her cook had thumb'd before;
One eye cast up upon that *great book*,
Yclep'd *The Family Receipt Book;*
By which she's rul'd in all her courses,
From stewing figs to drenching horses.
—Then pans and pickling skillets rise,
In dreadful lustre to our eyes.

With store of sweetmeats ranged in order,
And *potted nothings* on the border;
While salves and candle-cups between,
With squalling children, close the scene."

We find here, too, the source of one of those familiar lines, which so many quote without knowing whence they come;— one of those stray fragments, whose parentage is doubtful, but to which (as the law says of illegitimate children) "*pater est populus*."

"You write with ease, to show your breeding,
But easy writing's curst hard reading."

In the following passage, with more of the tact of a man of the world than the ardour of a poet, he dismisses the object nearest his heart with the mere passing gallantry of a compliment:—

"O! should your genius ever rise,
And make you *Laureate* in the skies,
I'd hold my life, in twenty years,
You'd spoil the *music* of the *spheres*.
—Nay, should the rapture-breathing Nine
In one celestial concert join,
Their sovereign's power to rehearse,
—Were you to furnish them with verse,
By Jove, I'd fly the heavenly throng,
Tho' *Phœbus* play'd and *Linley* sung."

On the opening of the New Assembly Rooms at Bath, which commenced with a ridotto, Sept. 30, 1771, he wrote a humorous description of the entertainment, called "An Epistle from Timothy Screw to his Brother Henry, Waiter at Almack's," which appeared first in the Bath Chronicle, and was so eagerly sought after, that Crutwell, the editor, was induced to publish it in a separate form. The allusions in this trifle have, of course, lost their zest by time; and a specimen or two of its humour will be all that is necessary here.

"Two rooms were first opened—the *long* and the *round* one,
(These *Hogstyegon* names only serve to confound one,)
Both splendidly lit with the new chandeliers,
With drops hanging down like the bobs at Peg's ears:
While jewels of *paste* reflected the rays,
And *Bristol-stone* diamonds gave strength to the blaze:
So that it was doubtful, to view the bright clusters,
Which sent the most light out, the ear-rings or lustres.
* * * * * * * * * * *
Nor less among you was the medley, ye fair!
I believe there *were* some beside quality there:
Miss *Spiggot*, Miss *Brussels*, Miss *Tape*, and Miss *Socket*,
Miss *Trinket*, and aunt, with her leathern pocket,
With good Mrs. *Soaker*, who made her old chin go,
For hours, bobnobbing with Mrs. *Syringo*:
Had *Tib* staid at home, I b'lieve none would have miss'd her,
Or pretty *Peg Runt*, with her tight little sister," etc. etc.

CHAPTER II.

Duels with Mr. Mathews.—Marriage with Miss Linley.

Towards the close of the year 1771, the elder Mr. Sheridan went to Dublin, to perform at the theatre of that city,—leaving his young and lively family at Bath, with nothing but their hearts and imaginations to direct them.

The following letters, which passed between him and his son Richard during his absence, though possessing little other interest than that of having been written at such a period, will not, perhaps, be unwelcome to the reader :—

" My Dear Richard, *Dublin, Dec. 7th, 1771.*

" How could you be so wrong-headed as to commence cold bathing at such a season of the year, and I suppose without any preparation too ? You have paid sufficiently for your folly, but I hope the ill effects of it have been long since over. You and your brother are fond of quacking, a most dangerous disposition with regard to health Let slight things pass away of themselves ; in a case that requires assistance do nothing without advice. Mr. Crook is a very able man in his way. Should a physician be at any time wanting, apply to Dr. Nesbitt, and tell him that at leaving Bath I recommended you all to his care. This indeed I intended to have mentioned to him, but it slipped my memory. I forgot Mr. Crooke's bill, too, but desire I may have the amount by the next letter. Pray what is the meaning of my hearing so seldom from Bath? Six weeks here, and but two letters ! You were very tardy, what are your sisters about? I shall not easily forgive any future omissions. I suppose Charles received my answer to his, and the 20*l.* bill from Whately. I shall order another to be sent at Christmas for the rent and other necessaries. I have not time at present to enter upon the subject of English authors, etc. but shall write to you upon that head when I get a little leisure. Nothing can be conceived in a more deplorable state than the stage of Dublin. I found two miserable companies opposing and starving each other. I chose the least bad of them ; and, wretched as they are, it has had no effect on my nights, numbers having been turned away every time I played, and the receipts have been larger than when I had Barry, his wife, and Mrs. Fitz-Henry to play with me. However, I shall not be able to continue it long, as there is no possibility of getting up a sufficient number of plays with such poor materials. I purpose to have done the week after next, and apply vigorously to the material point which brought me over. I find all ranks and parties very zealous for forwarding my scheme, and have reason to believe it will be carried in parliament after the recess, without opposition. It was in vain to have attempted it before, for never was party violence[1] carried to such a height as in this sessions ; the House seldom

[1] The money-bill, brought forward this year under Lord Townsend's administration, encountered violent opposition, and was finally rejected.

breaking up till eleven or twelve at night. From these contests, the desire of improving in the article of elocution is become very general. There are no less than five persons of rank and fortune now waiting my leisure to become my pupils. Remember me to all friends, particularly to our good landlord and landlady. I am, with love and blessing to you all,

"Your affectionate father,

"THOMAS SHERIDAN.

"P. S.—Tell your sisters I shall send the poplins as soon as I can get an opportunity."

"DEAR FATHER,

"We have been for some time in hopes of receiving a letter, that we might know that you had acquitted us of neglect in writing. At the same time we imagine that the time is not far when writing will be unnecessary; and we cannot help wishing to know the posture of the affairs, which, as you have not talked of returning, seem probable to detain you longer than you intended. I am perpetually asked when Mr. Sheridan is to have his patent for the theatre, which all the Irish here take for granted, and I often receive a great deal of information from them on the subject. Yet I cannot help being vexed when I see in the Dublin papers such bustling accounts of the proceedings of your House of Commons, as I remember it was your argument against attempting any thing from parliamentary authority in England. However, the folks here regret you, as one that is to be fixed in another kingdom, and will scarcely believe that you will ever visit Bath at all; and we are often asked if we have not received the letter which is to call us over.

"I could scarcely have conceived that the winter was so near departing, were I not now writing after dinner by day-light. Indeed the first winter season is not yet over at Bath. They have balls, concerts, etc., at the rooms, from the old subscription still, and the spring ones are immediately to succeed them. They are likewise going to perform oratorios here. Mr. Linley and his whole family, down to the seven year olds, are to support one set at the new rooms, and a band of singers from London another at the old. Our weather here, or the effects of it, have been so uninviting to all kinds of birds, that there has not been the smallest excuse to take a gun into the fields this winter;—a point more to the regret of Charles than myself.

"We are all now in dolefuls for the Princess Dowager; but as there was no necessity for our being dressed or weeping mourners, we were easily provided. Our acquaintances stand pretty much the same as when you left us,—only that I think in general we are less intimate, by which I believe you will not think us great losers. Indeed, excepting Mr. Wyndham, I have not met with one person with whom I would wish to be intimate; though there was a Mr. Lutterel, (brother to the Colonel,)—who was some months ago introduced to me by an old Harrow acquaintance,—who made me many professions at parting, and wanted me vastly to name some way in which he could be useful to me; but the relying on *acquaintances*, or *seeking* of friendships, is a fault which I think I shall always have prudence to avoid.

"Lissy begins to be tormented again with the toothache;—otherwise, we are all well.

"I am, Sir, your sincerely dutiful and affectionate son,

"*Friday, Feb.* 29. "R. B. SHERIDAN.

"I beg you will not judge of my attention to the improvement of my hand-writing by this letter, as I am out of the way of a better pen."

Charles Sheridan, now one-and-twenty, the oldest and gravest of the party, finding his passion for Miss Linley increase every day, and conscious of the imprudence of yielding to it any further, wisely determined to fly from the struggle altogether. Having taken a solemn farewell of her in a letter, which his youngest sister delivered, he withdrew to a farm-house about seven or eight miles from Bath, little suspecting that he left his brother in full possession of that heart, of which he thus reluctantly and hopelessly raised the siege. Nor would this secret perhaps have been discovered for some time, had not another lover, of a less legitimate kind than either, by the alarming importunity of his courtship, made an explanation on all sides necessary.

Captain Mathews, a married man and intimate with Miss Linley's family, presuming upon the innocent familiarity which her youth and his own station permitted between them, had for some time not only rendered her remarkable by his indiscreet attentions in public, but had even persecuted her in private with those unlawful addresses and proposals, which a timid female will sometimes rather endure, than encounter that share of the shame which may be reflected upon herself by their disclosure. To the threat of self-destruction, often tried with effect in these cases, he is said to have added the still more unmanly menace of ruining, at least, her reputation, if he could not undermine her virtue. Terrified by his perseverance, and dreading the consequences of her father's temper, if this violation of his confidence and hospitality were exposed to him, she at length confided her distresses to Richard Sheridan; who, having consulted with his sister, and, for the first time, disclosed to her the state of his heart with respect to Miss Linley, lost no time in expostulating with Mathews, upon the cruelty, libertinism, and fruitlessness of his pursuit. Such a remonstrance, however, was but little calculated to conciliate the forbearance of this professed man of gallantry, who, it appears by the following allusion to him under the name of Lothario, in a poem written by Sheridan at the time, still counted upon the possibility of gaining his object, or, at least, blighting the fruit which he could not reach:—

> Nor spare the flirting *Cassoc'd rogue*,
> Nor antient Cullin's polish'd brogue;
> Nor gay *Lothario's* nobler name,
> That *Nimrod* to all female fame.

In consequence of this persecution, and an increasing dislike to her profession, which made her shrink more and more from the gaze of the many, in proportion as she became devoted to the love of one, she adopted, early in 1772, the romantic resolution of flying secretly to France, and taking refuge in a convent,—intending, at the same time, to indemnify her father, to whom she was bound till the age of 21, by the surrender to him of part of the sum which Mr. Long had settled upon her. Sheridan, who, it is probable, had been the chief adviser of her flight, was, of course, not slow in offering to be the partner of it. His sister, whom he seems to have persuaded that his conduct in this affair arose solely from a wish to serve Miss Linley, as a friend, without any design or desire to take advantage of her elopement, as a lover, not only assisted them with money out of her little fund for house-expenses, but gave them letters of introduction to a family with whom she had been acquainted at St. Quentin. On the evening appointed for their departure,—while Mr. Linley, his eldest son, and Miss Maria Linley, were engaged at a concert, from which the young Cecilia herself had been, on a plea of illness, excused,—she was conveyed by Sheridan in a sedan-chair from her father's house in the Crescent, to a post-chaise which waited for them on the London road, and in which she found a woman whom her lover had hired, as a sort of protecting Minerva, to accompany them in their flight.

It will be recollected that Sheridan was at this time little more than twenty, and his companion just entering her eighteenth year. On their arrival in London, with an adroitness which was, at least, very dramatic, he introduced her to an old friend of his family (Mr. Ewart, a respectable brandy-merchant in the city), as a rich heiress who had consented to elope with him to the Continent;—in consequence of which the old gentleman, with many commendations of his wisdom, for having given up the imprudent pursuit of Miss Linley, not only accommodated the fugitives with a passage on board a ship, which he had ready to sail from the port of London to Dunkirk, but gave them letters of recommendation to his correspondents at that place, who with the same zeal and dispatch facilitated their journey to Lisle.

On their leaving Dunkirk, as was natural to expect, the chivalrous and disinterested protector degenerated into a mere selfish lover. It was represented by him, with arguments which seemed to appeal to prudence as well as feeling, that after the step which they had taken, she could not possibly appear in England again but as his wife. He was, therefore, he said, resolved not to deposit her in a convent, till she had consented, by the ceremony of a marriage, to confirm to him that right of protecting her, which he

had now but temporarily assumed. It did not, we may suppose, require much eloquence, to convince her heart of the truth of this reasoning; and, accordingly, at a little village, not far from Calais, they were married about the latter end of March, 1772, by a priest well known for his services on such occasions.

They thence immediately proceeded to Lisle, where Miss Linley, as she must still be called, giving up her intention of going on to St. Quentin, procured an apartment in a convent, with the determination of remaining there, till Sheridan should have the means of supporting her as his acknowledged wife. A letter which he wrote to his brother from this place, dated April 15, though it throws but little additional light on the narrative, is too interesting an illustration of it to be omitted here.

"Dear Brother,

"Most probably you will have thought me very inexcusable for not having writ to you. You will be surprized, too, to be told that, except your letter just after we arrived, we have never received one line from Bath. We suppose for certain that there are letters somewhere, in which case we shall have sent to every place almost but the right, whither, I hope, I have now sent also. You will soon see me in England. Every thing on our side has at last succeeded. Miss L—— is now fixing in a convent, where she has been entered some time. This has been a much more difficult point than you could have imagined, and we have, I find, been extremely fortunate. She has been ill, but is now recovered; this, too, has delayed me. We would have wrote, but have been kept in the most tormenting expectation, from day to day, of receiving your letters: but, as every thing is now so happily settled here, I will delay no longer giving you that information, though probably I shall set out for England, without knowing a syllable of what has happened with you. All is well I hope, and I hope, too, that though you may have been ignorant for some time, of our proceedings, *you* never could have been uneasy lest any thing should tempt me to depart, even in a thought, from the honour and consistency which engaged me at first. I wrote to M——[1] above a week ago, which I think was necessary and right. I hope he has acted the one proper part which was left him; and, to speak from my *feelings*, I cannot but say that I shall be very happy to find no further disagreeable consequence pursuing him; for, as Brutus says of Cæsar, etc.—if I delay one moment longer, I lose the post.

"I have writ now, too, to Mr. Adams, and should apologize to you for having writ to him first and lost my time for you. Love to my sisters, Miss L—— to all.

"Ever, Charles, your affec^e. Brother,

"R. B. Sheridan.

"I need not tell you that we altered quite our route."

The illness of Miss Linley, to which he alludes, and which had been occasioned by fatigue and agitation of mind, came on some

[1] Mathews.

days after her retirement to the convent; but an English physician, Dr. Dolman of York, who happened to be resident in Lisle at the time, was called in to attend her; and in order that she might be more directly under his care, he and Mrs. Dolman invited her to their house, where she was found by Mr. Linley, on his arrival in pursuit of her. After a few words of private explanation from Sheridan, which had the effect of reconciling him to his truant daughter, Mr. Linley insisted upon her returning with him immediately to England, in order to fulfil some engagements which he had entered into on her account; and, a promise being given that, as soon as these engagements were accomplished, she should be allowed to resume her plan of retirement at Lisle, the whole party set off amicably together for England.

On the first discovery of the elopement, the landlord of the house in which the Sheridans resided had, from a feeling of pity for the situation of the young ladies,—now left without the protection of either father or brother,—gone off, at break of day, to the retreat of Charles Sheridan, and informed him of the event which had just occurred. Poor Charles, wholly ignorant till then of his brother's attachment to Miss Linley, felt all that a man may be supposed to feel, who had but too much reason to think himself betrayed, as well as disappointed. He hastened to Bath, where he found a still more furious lover, Mr. Mathews, enquiring at the house every particular of the affair, and almost avowing, in the impotence of his rage, the unprincipled design which this summary step had frustrated. In the course of their conversation, Charles Sheridan let fall some unguarded expressions of anger against his brother, which this gentleman, who seems to have been eminently qualified for a certain line of characters indispensable in all romances, treasured up in his memory, and, as it will appear, afterwards availed himself of them. For the four or five weeks during which the young couple were absent, he never ceased to haunt the Sheridan family, with enquiries, rumours, and other disturbing visitations; and, at length, urged on by the restlessness of revenge, inserted the following violent advertisement in the Bath Chronicle :—

"*Wednesday, April 8th*, 1772.

"Mr. Richard S******* having attempted, in a letter left behind him for that purpose, to account for his scandalous method of running away from this place, by insinuations derogating from *my* character, and that of a young lady, innocent as far as relates to *me*, or my knowledge: since which he has neither taken any notice of letters, or even informed his own family of the place where he has hid himself; I can no longer think he deserves the treatment of a gentleman, and therefore shall

trouble myself no further about him than, in this public method, to post him as a L*** and a treacherous S********,

"And as I am convinced there have been many malevolent incendiaries concerned in the propagation of his infamous lie, if any of them, unprotected by *age*, *infirmities*, or profession, will dare to acknowledge the part they have acted, and affirm *to* what they have said *of* me, they may depend on receiving the proper reward of their villainy, in the most public manner. The world will be candid enough to judge properly (I make no doubt) of any private abuse on this subject for the future; as nobody can defend himself from an accusation he is ignorant of.

"THOMAS MATHEWS."

On a remonstrance from Miss Sheridan upon this outrageous proceeding, he did not hesitate to assert that her brother Charles was privy to it;—a charge which the latter with indignation repelled, and was only prevented by the sudden departure of Mathews to London from calling him to a more serious account for the falsehood.

At this period the party from the Continent arrived; and as a detail of the circumstances which immediately followed has been found in Mr. Sheridan's own hand-writing,—drawn up hastily, it appears, at the Parade Coffee-house, Bath, the evening before his second duel with Mr. Mathews,—it would be little better than profanation to communicate them in any other words.

"It has ever been esteemed impertinent to appeal to the public in concerns entirely private; but there now and then occurs a *private* incident which, by being explained, may be productive of *public* advantage. This consideration, and the precedent of a public appeal in this same affair, are my only apologies for the following lines:—

"Mr. T. Mathews thought himself essentially injured by Mr. R. Sheridan's having co-operated in the virtuous efforts of a young lady to escape the snares of vice and dissimulation. He wrote several most abusive threats to Mr. S, then in France. He laboured, with a cruel industry, to vilify his character in England. He publicly posted him as a scoundrel and a liar. Mr. S. answered him from France (hurried and surprized), that he would never sleep in England till he had thanked him as he deserved.

"Mr. S. arrived in London at 9 o'clock at night. At 10 he is informed, by Mr. S. Ewart, that Mr. M. is in town. Mr. S. had sat up at Canterbury, to keep his idle promise to Mr. M.—He resolved to call on him that night, as, in case he had not found him in town, he had called on Mr. Ewart to accompany him to Bath, being bound by Mr. Linley not to let any thing pass between him and Mr. M. till he had arrived thither. Mr. S. came to Mr. Cochlin's, in Crutched Friars, (where Mr. M. was lodged,) about half after twelve. The key of Mr. C.'s door was lost; Mr. S. was denied admittance. By two o'clock he got in. Mr. M. had been previously down to the door, and told Mr. S. he should be admitted, and had retired to bed again. He dressed, complained of the cold, endea-

voured to get heat into him, called Mr. S. his *dear friend,* and forced him to—*sit down.*

Mr. S. had been informed that Mr. M. had sworn his death – that Mr. M. had, in numberless companies, produced bills on France, whither he meant to retire, on the completion of his revenge. Mr. M. had warned Mr. Ewart to advise his friend not even to come in his way without a sword, as he could not answer for the consequence.

" Mr. M. had left two letters for Mr. S., in which he declares he is to be met with at *any* hour, and begs Mr. S. will not "*deprive himself of so much sleep,* or *stand on any ceremony*." Mr. S. called on him at the hour mentioned. Mr. S. was admitted with the difficulty mentioned. Mr. S. declares that, on Mr. M.'s perceiving that he came to answer *then* to his challenge, he does not remember ever to have seen a *man* behave so perfectly dastardly. Mr. M. detained Mr. S. till seven o'clock the next morning. He (Mr. M.) said he never meant to quarrel with Mr. S. He convinced Mr. S. that his enmity ought to be directed solely against his brother and another gentleman at Bath. Mr. S. went to Bath [1]." ******

On his arrival in Bath (whither he travelled with Miss Linley and her Father), Sheridan lost not a moment in ascertaining the falsehood of the charge against his brother. While Charles, however, indignantly denied the flagitious conduct imputed to him by Mathews, he expressed his opinion of the step which Sheridan and Miss Linley had taken in terms of considerable warmth, which were overheard by some of the family. As soon as the young ladies had retired to bed, the two brothers, without any announcement of their intention, set off post together for London, Sheridan having previously written the following letter to Mr. Wade, the Master of the Ceremonies.

" Sir,

" I ought to apologize to you for troubling you again on a subject which should concern so few.

" I find Mr. Mathews's bahaviour to have been such that I cannot be satisfied with his *concession*, as a *consequence* of an *explanation* from me. I called on Mr. Mathews last Wednesday night at Mr. Cochlin's, without the smallest expectation of coming to any *verbal* explanation with him. A proposal of a *pacific* meeting the next day was the consequence, which ended in those advertisements and the letter to you. As for Mr. Mathews's honour or *spirit* in this whole affair, I shall only add that a few hours may possibly give some proof of the latter; while, in my own justification I affirm, that it was far from being my fault that this point now remains to be determined.

" On discovering Mr. Mathews's *benevolent* interposition in my own family, I have counterordered the advertisements that were agreed on, as I think even an *explanation* would now misbecome me; an agree-

[1] The remainder of this paper is omitted, as only briefly referring to circumstances, which will be found more minutely detailed in another document.

ment to them was the effect more of mere *charity* than *judgment*. As I find it necessary to make *all* my sentiments as public as possible, your declaring this will greatly oblige,

"Your very humble Servant,
"R. B. Sheridan."

"Sat. 12 o'clock, May 2d, 1772.
"*To William Wade, Esq.*"

On the following day (Sunday), when the young gentlemen did not appear, the alarm of their sisters was not a little increased, by hearing that high words had been exchanged the evening before, and that it was feared a duel between the brothers would be the consequence. Though unable to credit this dreadful surmise, yet full of the various apprehensions which such mystery was calculated to inspire, they had instant recourse to Miss Linley, the fair *Helen* of all this strife, as the person most likely to be acquainted with their brother Richard's designs, and to relieve them from the suspense under which they laboured. She, however, was as ignorant of the transaction as themselves, and their mutual distress being heightened by sympathy, a scene of tears and fainting-fits ensued, of which no less remarkable a person than Doctor Priestley, who lodged in Mr. Linley's house at the time, happened to be a witness.

On the arrival of the brothers in town, Richard Sheridan instantly called Mathews out. His second on the occasion was Mr. Ewart, and the particulars of the duel are thus stated by himself, in a letter which he addressed to Captain Knight, the second of Mathews, soon after the subsequent duel in Bath.

"Sir,

"On the evening preceding my last meeting with Mr. Mathews, Mr. Barnett [1] produced a paper to me, written by Mr. Mathews, containing an account of our former meetings in London. As I had before frequently heard of Mr. Mathews's relation of that affair, without interesting myself much in contradicting it, I should certainly have treated this in the same manner, had it not been seemingly authenticated by Mr. Knight's name being subscribed to it. My asserting that the paper contains much misrepresentation, equivocation, and falsity, might make it appear strange that I should apply to you in this manner for information on the subject: but, as it likewise contradicts what I have been told were Mr. Knight's sentiments and assertions on that affair, I think I owe it to his credit, as well as my own justification, first, to be satisfied from himself whether he really subscribed and will support the truth to the account shown by Mr. Mathews. Give me leave previously to relate what *I* have affirmed to have been a real state of our meeting in London, and which I am now ready to support on my honour, or my

[1] The friend of Mathews in the second duel.

oath, as the best account I can give of Mr. Mathews's relation is, that it is almost directly opposite to mine.

"Mr. Ewart accompanied me to Hyde Park, about six in the evening, where we met you and Mr. Mathews, and we walked together to the ring.—Mr. Mathews refusing to make any other acknowledgment than he had done, I observed that we were come to the ground: Mr. Mathews objected to the spot, and appealed to you.—We proceeded to the back of a building on the other side of the ring, the ground was there perfectly level. I called on him, and drew my sword (he having previously declined pistols). Mr. Ewart observed a sentinel on the other side of the building; we advanced to another part of the park. I stopped again at a seemingly convenient place: Mr. Mathews objected to the observation of some people at a great distance, and proposed to retire to the Hercules' Pillars till the park should be clear: we did so. In a little time we returned.—I again drew my sword; Mr. Mathews again objected to the observation of a person who seemed to watch us. Mr. Ewart observed that the chance was equal, and engaged that no one should stop him, should it be necessary for him to retire to the gate, where we had a chaise and four, which was equally at his service. Mr. Mathews declared that he would not engage while any one was within sight, and proposed to defer it till next morning. I turned to you, and said that 'this was trifling work,' that I could not admit of any delay, and engaged to remove the gentleman (who proved to be an officer, and who, on my going up to him, and assuring him that any interposition would be ill timed, politely retired). Mr. Mathews, in the mean time, had returned towards the gate; Mr. Ewart and I called to you, and followed. We returned to the Hercules' Pillars, and went from thence, by agreement to the Bedford Coffee House, where, the master being alarmed, you came and conducted us to Mr. Mathews at the Castle Tavern, Henrietta Street. Mr. Ewart took lights up in his hand, and almost immediately on our entering the room we engaged. I struck Mr. Mathews's point so much out of the line, that I stepped up and caught hold of his wrist, or the hilt of his sword, while the point of mine was at his breast. You ran in and caught hold of my arm, exclaiming, '*don't kill him.*' I struggled to disengage my arm, and said his sword was in my power. Mr. Mathews called out twice or thrice, '*I beg my life.*'—We were parted. You immediately said, '*there, he has begged his life, and now there is an end of it;*' and Mr. Ewart's saying that, when his sword was in my power, as I attempted no more, you should not have interfered, you replied that you *were wrong*, but that you had *done it hastily, and to prevent mischief*—or words to that effect. Mr. Mathews then hinted that I was rather *obliged to your interposition* for the advantage: you declared that '*before* you did so, both the swords were in Mr. Sheridan's power.' Mr. Mathews still seemed resolved to give it another turn, and observed that *he had never quitted his sword.* —Provoked at this, I then swore, with too much heat perhaps, that he should either give up his sword and I would break it, or go to his guard again. He refused—but, on my persisting, either gave it into my hand, or flung it on the table, or the ground (*which*, I will not absolutely affirm). I broke it, and flung the hilt to the other end of the room. He exclaimed at this. I took a mourning sword from Mr. Ewart, and presenting him

with mine, gave my honour that what had passed should never be mentioned by me, and he might now right himself again. He replied that he '*would never draw a sword against the man who had given him his life :*'—but, on his still exclaiming against the indignity of breaking his sword (which he had brought upon himself), Mr. Ewart offered him the pistols, and some altercation passed between them. Mr. Mathews said, that he *could never show his face, if it were known how his sword was broke—that such a thing had never been done—that it cancelled all obligations, etc. etc.* You seemed to think it was wrong, and we both proposed, that if he never misrepresented the affair, it should not be mentioned by us. This was settled. I then asked Mr. Mathews, whether (as he had expressed himself sensible of, and shocked at the injustice and indignity he had done me in his advertisement) it did not occur to him that he owed me another satisfaction; and that, as it was now in his power to do it without discredit, I supposed, he would not hesitate. This he absolutely refused, unless conditionally; I insisted on it, and said I would not leave the room till it was settled. After much altercation, and with much ill-grace, he gave the apology, which afterwards appeared. We parted, and I returned immediately to Bath. I, there, to Colonel Gould, Captain Wade, Mr. Creaser, and others, mentioned the affair to Mr. Mathews's credit—said that chance having given me the advantage, Mr. Mathews had consented to that apology, and mentioned nothing of the sword. Mr. Mathews came down, and in two days I found the whole affair had been stated in a different light, and insinuations given out to the same purpose as in the paper, which has occasioned this trouble. I had *undoubted authority* that these accounts proceeded from Mr. Mathews, and likewise that Mr. Knight had never had any share in them. I then thought I no longer owed Mr. Mathews the compliment to conceal any circumstance, and I related the affair to several gentlemen exactly as above.

"Now, sir, as I have put down nothing in this account but upon the most assured recollection, and, as Mr. Mathews's paper either directly or equivocally contradicts almost every article of it, and as your name is subscribed to that paper, I flatter myself that I have a right to expect your answer to the following questions :—First,

"Is there any falsity or misrepresentation in what I have advanced above?

"With regard to Mr. Mathews's paper—did I, in the park, seem in the smallest article inclined to enter into conversation with Mr. Mathews?—He insinuates that I did.

"Did Mr. Mathews not *beg his life?*—He affirms he did not.

"Did I break his sword *without warning?*—He affirms I did it without warning, on his laying it on the table.

"Did I not offer him mine?—He omits it.

"Did Mr. Mathews give me the apology as a point of generosity, *on my desisting to demand it?*—He affirms he did.

"I shall now give my reasons for doubting your having authenticated this paper.

"1. Because I think it full of falsehood and misrepresentation, and Mr. Knight has the character of a man of truth and honour.

"2. When you were at Bath, I was informed that you had never expressed any such sentiments.

"3. I have been told that, in Wales, Mr. Mathews never *told his story* in the presence of Mr. Knight, who had never there insinuated anything to my disadvantage.

"4. The paper shown me by Mr. Barnett contains (if my memory does not deceive me) three separate sheets of writing-paper. Mr. Knight's evidence is annexed to the last, which contains chiefly a copy of our *first* proposed advertisements, which Mr. Mathews had, in Mr. Knight's presence, agreed should be destroyed as totally void; and which (in a letter to Colonel Gould, by whom I had insisted on it) he declared upon his honour he knew nothing about, nor should ever make the least use of.

"These, sir, are my reasons for applying to yourself, in preference to any appeal to Mr. Ewart, my second on that occasion, which is what I would wish to avoid. As for Mr. Mathews's assertions, I shall never be concerned at them. I have ever avoided any verbal altercation with that gentleman, and he has now secured himself from any other.

"I am your very humble servant,
"R. B Sheridan."

It was not till Tuesday morning that the young ladies at Bath were relieved from their suspense by the return of the two brothers, who entered evidently much fatigued, not having been in bed since they left home, and produced the apology of Mr. Mathews, which was instantly sent to Crutwell for insertion. It was in the following terms :—

"Being convinced that the expressions I made use of to Mr. Sheridan's disadvantage were the effects of passion and misrepresentation, I retract what I have said to that gentleman's disadvantage, and particularly beg his pardon for my advertisement in the Bath Chronicle.

"Thomas Mathews[1]."

With the odour of this transaction fresh about him, Mr. Mathews retired to his estate in Wales, and, as he might have expected, found himself universally shunned. An apology may be, according to circumstances, either the noblest effort of manliness or the last resource of fear, and it was evident, from the reception which this gentleman experienced every where, that the former, at least, was not the class to which his late retraction had been referred. In this crisis of his character, a Mr. Barnett, who had but lately come to reside in his neighbourhood, observing with pain the mortifications

[1] This appeared in the Bath Chronicle of May 7th. In another part of the same paper there is the following paragraph:—"We can with authority contradict the account in the London Evening Post of last night, of a duel between Mr. M—t—ws and Mr. S—r—n, as to the time and event of their meeting, Mr. S. having been at this place on Saturday, and both these gentlemen being here at present."

to which he was exposed, and perhaps thinking them, in some degree, unmerited, took upon him to urge earnestly the necessity of a second meeting with Sheridan, as the only means of removing the stigma left by the first; and, with a degree of Irish friendliness, not forgotten in the portrait of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, offered himself to be the bearer of the challenge. The desperation of persons in Mr. Mathews's circumstances, is in general much more formidable than the most acknowledged valour; and we may easily believe that it was with no ordinary eagerness he accepted the proposal of his new ally, and proceeded with him, full of vengeance, to Bath.

The elder Mr. Sheridan, who had but just returned from Ireland, and been with some little difficulty induced to forgive his son for the wild achievements he had been engaged in during his absence, was at this time in London, making arrangements for the departure of his favourite, Charles, who, through the interest of Mr. Wheatley, an old friend of the family, had been appointed Secretary to the Embassy in Sweden. Miss Linley—wife and no wife,—obliged to conceal from the world what her heart would have been most proud to avow, was also absent from Bath, being engaged at the Oxford music-meeting. The letter containing the preliminaries of the challenge was delivered by Mr. Barnett, with rather unnecessary cruelty, into the hands of Miss Sheridan, under the pretext, however, that it was a note of invitation for her brother, and on the following morning, before it was quite daylight, the parties met at Kingsdown—Mr. Mathews, attended by his neighbour Mr. Barnett, and Sheridan by a gentleman of the name of Paumier, nearly as young as himself, and but little qualified for a trust of such importance and delicacy.

The account of the duel, which I shall here subjoin, was drawn up some months after, by the second of Mr. Mathews, and deposited in the hands of Captain Wade, the master of the ceremonies. Though somewhat partially coloured, and (according to Mr. Sheridan's remarks upon it, which shall be noticed presently) incorrect in some particulars, it is, upon the whole, perhaps as accurate a statement as could be expected, and received, as appears by the following letter from Mr. Brereton (another of Mr. Sheridan's intimate friends), all the sanction that Captain Paumier's concurrence in the truth of its most material facts could furnish.

"Dear Sir,

"In consequence of some reports spread to the disadvantage of Mr. Mathews, it seems he obtained from Mr. Barnett an impartial relation of the last affair with Mr. Sheridan, directed to you. This account Mr.

Paumier has seen, and I, at Mr. Mathews's desire, inquired from him if he thought it true and impartial: he says it differs, in a few immaterial circumstances only, from his opinion, and has given me authority to declare this to you.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most humble and obedient servant,

(Signed) "WILLIAM BRERETON."

"*Bath, Oct.* 24. 1772.

Copy of a paper left by Mr. Barnett in the Hands of Captain William Wade, Master of the Ceremonies at Bath.

"On quitting our chaises at the top of Kingsdown, I entered into a conversation with Captain Paumier, relative to some preliminaries I thought ought to be settled in an affair which was likely to end very seriously;—particularly the method of using their pistols, which Mr. Mathews had repeatedly signified his desire to use prior to swords, from a conviction that Mr. Sheridan would run in on him, and an ungentlemanlike scuffle probably be the consequence. This, however, was refused by Mr. Sheridan, declaring he had no pistols: Captain Paumier replied he had a brace (which I know were loaded).—By my advice, Mr. Mathews's were not loaded, as I imagined it was always customary to load on the field, which I mentioned to Captain Paumier at the White-Hart, before we went out, and desired he would draw his pistols. He replied, as they were already loaded, and they going on a public road at that time of the morning, he might as well let them remain so, till we got to the place appointed, when he would on his honour draw them, which I am convinced he would have done had there been time; but Mr. Sheridan immediately drew his sword, and, in a vaunting manner, desired Mr. Mathews to draw (their ground was very uneven, and near the post-chaise).—Mr. Mathews drew; Mr. Sheridan advanced on him at first; Mr. Mathews in turn advanced fast on Mr. Sheridan; upon which he retreated, till he very suddenly ran in upon Mr. Mathews, laying himself exceedingly open, and endeavouring to get hold of Mr. Mathews's sword; Mr. Mathews received him on his point, and, I believe, disengaged his sword from Mr. Sheridan's body, and gave him another wound; which, I suppose, must have been either against one of his ribs, or his breast-bone, as his sword broke, which I imagine happened from the resistance it met with from one of those parts, but whether it was broke by that, or on the closing, I cannot aver.

"Mr. Mathews, I think, on finding his sword broke, laid hold of Mr. Sheridan's sword-arm, and tripped up his heels: they both fell; Mr. Mathews was uppermost, with the hilt of his sword in his hand, having about six or seven inches of the blade to it, with which I saw him give Mr. Sheridan, as I imagined, a skin-wound or two in the neck; for it could be no more,—the remaining part of the sword being broad and blunt; he also beat him in the face either with his fist or the hilt of his sword. Upon this I turned from them, and asked Captain Paumier if we should not take them up; but I cannot say whether he heard me or not, as there was a good deal of noise; however, he made no reply. I again

turned to the combatants, who were much in the same situation: I found Mr. Sheridan's sword was bent, and he slipped his hand up the small part of it, and gave Mr. Mathews a slight wound in the left part of his belly: I that instant turned again to Captain Paumier, and proposed again our taking them up. He in the same moment called out, 'Oh! he is killed, he is killed!'—I as quick as possible turned again, and found Mr. Mathews had recovered the point of his sword, that was before on the ground, with which he had wounded Mr. Sheridan in the belly: I saw him drawing the point out of the wound. By this time Mr. Sheridan's sword was broke, which he told us.—Captain Paumier called out to him, 'My dear Sheridan, beg your life, and I will be yours for ever.' I also desired him to ask his life: he replied, 'No, by God, I won't.' I then told Captain Paumier it would not do to wait for those punctilios (or words to that effect), and desired he would assist me in taking them up. Mr. Mathews most readily acquiesced first, desiring me to see Mr. Sheridan was disarmed. I desired him to give me the tuck, which he readily did, as did Mr. Sheridan the broken part of his sword to Captain Paumier. Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Mathews both got up, the former was helped into one of the chaises, and drove off for Bath, and Mr. Mathews made the best of his way for London.

"The whole of this narrative I declare, on the word and honour of a gentleman, to be exactly true; and that Mr. Mathews discovered as much genuine, cool, and intrepid resolution as man could do.

"I think I may be allowed to be an impartial relater of facts, as my motive for accompanying Mr. Mathews was no personal friendship, (not having any previous intimacy, or being barely acquainted with him,) but from a great desire of clearing up so ambiguous an affair, without prejudice to either party,—which a stranger was judged the most proper to do,—particularly as Mr. Mathews had been blamed before for taking a relation with him on a similar occasion.

(Signed) "WILLIAM BARNETT."

"*October*, 1772.

[1] The following account is given as an "Extract of a Letter from Bath," in the St. James's Chronicle, July 4: "Young Sheridan and Captain Mathews of this town, who lately had a rencontre in a tavern in London, upon account of the maid of Bath, Miss Linley, have had another this morning upon Kingsdown, about four miles hence. Sheridan is much wounded, but whether mortally or not is yet uncertain. Both their swords breaking upon the first lunge, they threw each other down, and with the broken pieces hacked at each other rolling upon the ground, the seconds standing by, quiet spectators. Mathews is but slightly wounded, and is since gone off." The Bath Chronicle, on the day after the duel (July 2d), gives the particulars thus:—"This morning about three o'clock, a second duel was fought with swords between Captain Mathews and Mr. R. Sheridan, on Kingsdown, near this city, in consequence of their former dispute respecting an amiable young lady, which Mr. M. considered as improperly adjusted; Mr. S. having since their first rencontre, declared his sentiments respecting Mr. M. in a manner that the former thought required satisfaction. Mr. Sheridan received three or four wounds in his breast and sides, and now lies very ill. Mr. M. was only slightly wounded, and left this city soon after the affair was over."

The comments which Mr. Sheridan thought it necessary to make upon this narrative have been found in an unfinished state among his papers; and though they do not, as far as they go, disprove any thing material in its statements, (except, perhaps, with respect to the nature of the wounds which he received,) yet, as containing some curious touches of character, and as a document which he himself thought worth preserving, it is here inserted.

"*To William Barnett, Esq.*

"Sir,

"It has always appeared to me so impertinent for individuals to appeal to the public on transactions merely private, that I own the most apparent necessity does not prevent my entering into such a dispute without an awkward consciousness of its impropriety. Indeed, I am not without some apprehension, that I may have no right to plead your having led the way in my excuse; as it appears not improbable that some ill-wisher to you, Sir, and the cause you have been engaged in, betrayed you first into this *exact narrative*, and then exposed it to the public eye, under pretence of vindicating your friend. However, as it is the opinion of some of my friends, that I ought not to suffer these papers to pass wholly unnoticed, I shall make a few observations on them, with that moderation which becomes one who is highly conscious of the impropriety of staking his single assertion against the apparent testimony of three. This, I say, would be an impropriety, as I am supposed to write to those who are not acquainted with the parties. I had some time ago a copy of these papers from Captain Wade, who informed me that they were lodged in his hands, to be made public only by judicial authority. I wrote to you, Sir, on the subject, to have from yourself an avowal that the account was yours; but as I received no answer, I have reason to compliment you with the supposition that you are not the author of it. However, as the name *William Barnett* is subscribed to it, you must accept my apologies for making use of that as the ostensible signature of the writer.—Mr. Paumier likewise (the gentleman who went out with me on that occasion in the character of a second) having assented to every thing material in it, I shall suppose the whole account likewise to be his; and as there are some circumstances which could come from no one but Mr. Mathews, I shall (without meaning to take from its authority) suppose it to be Mr. Mathews's also.

As it is highly indifferent to me whether the account I am to observe on be considered as accurately true or not, and I believe it is of very little consequence to any one else, I shall make those observations just in the same manner as I conceive any indifferent person of common sense, who should think it worth his while to peruse the matter with any degree of attention. In this light, the *truth* of the articles which are asserted under Mr. Barnett's name is what I have no business to meddle with; but, if it should appear that this *accurate narrative* frequently contradicts itself as well as all probability, and that there are some positive facts against it, which do not depend upon any one's assertion, I

must repeat that I shall either compliment Mr. Barnett's judgment, in supposing it not his, or his humanity in proving the *narrative* to partake of that confusion and uncertainty, which his well-wishers will plead to have possessed him in the transaction. On this account, what I shall say on the subject need be no further addressed to you; and, indeed, it is idle, in my opinion, to address even the publisher of a newspaper on a point that can concern so few, and ought to have been forgotten by them. This you must take as my excuse for having neglected the matter so long.

"The first point in Mr. Barnett's narrative that is of the least consequence to take notice of, is, where Mr. M. is represented as having repeatedly signified his desire to use pistols prior to swords from a conviction that Mr. Sheridan would run in upon him, and an ungentlemanlike scuffle probably be the consequence. This is one of those articles which evidently must be given to Mr. Mathews: for, as Mr. B.'s part is simply to relate a matter of fact, of which he was an eye-witness, he is by no means to answer for Mr. Mathews's *private convictions*. As this insinuation bears an obscure allusion to a past transaction of Mr. M.'s, I doubt not but he will be surprized at my indifference in not taking the trouble even to explain it. However, I cannot forbear to observe here that had I, at the period which this passage alludes to, known what was the theory which Mr. M. held of *gentemanly scuffle*, I might, possibly, have been so unhappy as to have put it out of his power ever to have brought it into practice.

"Mr. B. now charges me with having cut short a number of pretty preliminaries, concerning which he was treating with Captain Paumier, by drawing my sword, and, in a vaunting manner, desiring Mr. M. to draw. Though I acknowledge (with deference to these gentlemen) the full right of interference which seconds have on such occasions, yet I may remind Mr. B. that he was acquainted with my determination with regard to pistols before we went on the Down, nor could I have expected it to have been proposed. 'Mr. M. drew; Mr. S. advanced, etc.:'—here let me remind Mr. B. of a circumstance, which I am convinced his memory will at once acknowledge."

This paper ends here: but in a rougher draught of the same letter (for he appears to have studied and corrected it with no common care) the remarks are continued, in a hand not very legible, thus:

"But Mr. B. here represents me as drawing my sword in a *vaunting* manner. This I take to be a reflection; and can only say, that a person's demeanour is generally regulated by their idea of their antagonist, and for what I know, I may now be writing in a vaunting style. Here let me remind Mr. B. of an omission, which, I am convinced, nothing but want of recollection could occasion, yet which is a material point in an exact account of such an affair, nor does it reflect in the least on Mr. M. Mr. M. could not possibly have drawn his sword on my calling to him as

* *

It is impossible to make any connected sense of the passage that follows,

"Mr. B.'s account proceeds, that I 'advanced first on Mr. M.,' etc.; 'which, (says Mr. B.) I imagine, happened from the resistance it met with from one of those parts; but whether it was broke by that or on the closing, I cannot aver.' How strange is the confusion here!—First, it certainly broke;—whether it broke against rib or no, doubtful;—then, indeed, whether it broke at all, uncertain. * * * * But of all times Mr. B. could not have chosen a worse than this for Mr. M.'s sword to break; for the relating of the action unfortunately carries a contradiction with it;—since if, on closing, Mr. M. received me on his point, it is not possible for him to have made a lunge of such a nature as to break his sword against a rib-bone But as the time chosen is unfortunate, so is the place on which it is said to have broke,—as Mr. B. might have been informed, by inquiring of the surgeons, that I had no wounds on my breast or rib with the point of a sword, they being the marks of the jagged and blunted part."

He was driven from the ground to the White-Hart; where Ditcher and Sharpe, the most eminent surgeons of Bath, attended and dressed his wounds,—and, on the following day, at the request of his sisters, he was carefully removed to his own home. The newspapers, which contained the account of the affair, and even stated that Sheridan's life was in danger, reached the Linleys at Oxford, during the performance, but were anxiously concealed from Miss Linley by her father, who knew that the intelligence would totally disable her from appearing. Some persons, who were witnesses of the performance that day, still talk of the touching effect which her beauty and singing produced upon all present,—aware, as they were, that a heavy calamity had befallen her, of which she herself was perhaps the only one in the assembly ignorant.

In her way back to Bath, she was met at some miles from the town by a Mr. Panton, a clergyman, long intimate with the family, who, taking her from her father's chaise into his own, employed the rest of the journey in cautiously breaking to her the particulars of the alarming event that had occurred. Notwithstanding this precaution, her feelings were so taken by surprise, that, in the distress of the moment, she let the secret of her heart escape, and passionately exclaimed, "My husband! my husband!"—demanding to see him, and insisting upon her right as his wife to be near him, and watch over him day and night. Her entreaties, however, could not be complied with; for the elder Mr. Sheridan, on his return from town, incensed and grieved at the catastrophe to which his son's imprudent passion had led, refused for some time even to see him, and strictly forbade all intercourse between his daughters and the Linley family. But the appealing looks of a brother, lying wounded and unhappy, had more power over their hearts than the commands of a father, and

they, accordingly, contrived to communicate intelligence of the lovers to each other.

In the following letter, addressed to him by Charles at this time, we can trace that difference between the dispositions of the brothers, which, with every one except their father, rendered Richard, in spite of all his faults, by far the most popular and beloved of the two.

London, July 3d. 1772.

"Dear Dick,

"It was with the deepest concern I received the late accounts of you, though it was somewhat softened by the assurance of your not being in the least danger. You cannot conceive the uneasiness it occasioned to my father. Both he and I were resolved to believe the best, and to suppose you safe, but then we neither of us could approve of the cause in which you suffer. All your friends here condemned you. You risked every thing, where you had nothing to gain, to give your antagonist the thing he wished, a chance for recovering his reputation. Your courage was past dispute:— he wanted to get rid of the contemptible opinion he was held in, and you were good-natured enough to let him do it at your expense. It is not now a time to scold, but all your friends were of opinion, you could, with the greatest propriety, have refused to meet him. For my part, I shall suspend my judgment till better informed, only I cannot forgive your preferring swords.

"I am exceedingly unhappy at the situation I leave you in with respect to money matters, the more so as it is totally out of my power to be of any use to you. Ewart was greatly vexed at the manner of your drawing for the last 20*l.*—I own, I think with some reason.

"As to old Ewart, what you were talking about is absolutely impossible; he is already surprized at Mr. Linley's long delay, and, indeed, I think the latter much to blame in this respect. I did intend to give you some account of myself since my arrival here, but you cannot conceive how I have been hurried,—even much pressed for time at this *present writing*. I must therefore conclude, with wishing you speedily restored to health, and that if I could make your purse as whole as that will shortly be, I hope, it would make me exceedingly happy.

"I am, dear Dick, yours sincerely,

"C. F. Sheridan."

Finding that the suspicion of their marriage, which Miss Linley's unguarded exclamation had suggested, was gaining ground in the mind of both fathers,—who seemed equally determined to break the tie, if they could arrive at some positive proof of its existence,—Sheridan wrote frequently to his young wife, (who passed most of this anxious period with her relations at Wells,) cautioning her against being led into any acknowledgment, which might further the views of the elders against their happiness. Many methods were

tried upon both sides, to ensnare them into a confession of this nature; but they eluded every effort, and persisted in attributing the avowal which had escaped from Miss Linley before Mr. Panton and others, to the natural agitation and bewilderment into which her mind was thrown at the instant.

As soon as Sheridan was sufficiently recovered of his wounds[1], his father, in order to detach him, as much as possible, from the dangerous recollections which continually presented themselves in Bath, sent him to pass some months at Waltham Abbey, in Essex, under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Parker of Farm Hill, his most particular friends. In this retirement, where he continued, with but few and short intervals of absence, from August or September, 1772, till the spring of the following year, it is probable that, notwithstanding the ferment in which his heart was kept, he occasionally and desultorily occupies his hours in study. Among other proofs of industry, which I have found among his manuscripts, and which may possibly be referred to this period, is an abstract of the History of England—nearly filling a small quarto volume of more than a hundred pages, closely written. I have also found in his *early* hand-writing (for there was a considerable change in his writing afterwards) a collection of remarks on Sir William Temple's works, which may likewise have been among the fruits of his reading at Waltham Abbey.

These remarks are confined chiefly to verbal criticism, and prove, in many instances, that he had not yet quite formed his taste to that idiomatic English, which was afterwards one of the great charms of his own dramatic style. For instance, he objects to the following phrases:—"Then I *fell to* my task again." "These things *come*, with time, to be habitual."—"By which these people *come* to be either scattered or destroyed."—"Which alone could pretend to *contest it* with them:" (upon which phrase he remarks, "*It* refers to nothing here:") and the following graceful idiom in some verses by Temple:—

> "Thy busy head can find no gentle rest
> *For thinking* on the events," etc. etc.

Some of his observations, however, are just and tasteful. Upon the Essay "Of Popular Discontents," after remarking that "Sir W. T. opens all his Essays with something as foreign to the purpose as possible," he has the following criticism:—"Page 260.

[1] The Bath Chronicle of the 9th of July has the following paragraph:—"It is with great pleasure we inform our readers that Mr. Sheridan is declared by his surgeon to be out of danger."

'Represent misfortunes for faults, and *mole-hills* for *mountains*,' —the metaphorical and literal expression too often coupled. P. 262. 'Upon these four wheels the chariot of state may in all appearance drive easy and safe, or at least not be too much *shaken* by the usual *roughness* of ways, unequal *humours* of *men*, or any common accidents,'—another instance of the confusion of the metaphorical and literal expression."

Among the passages he quotes from Temple's verses, as faulty, is the following :—

"—that we may *see*
Thou art indeed the empress of the *sea*."

It is curious enough, that he himself was afterwards guilty of nearly as illicit a rhyme in his song "When 'tis night," and always defended it :—

"But when the fight's *begun*,
Each serving at his *gun*.'

Whatever grounds there may be for referring these labours of Sheridan to the period of his retirement at Waltham Abbey, there are certainly but few other intervals in his life that could be selected as likely to have afforded him opportunities of reading. Even here, however, the fears and anxieties that beset him were too many and incessant to leave much leisure for the pursuits of scholarship. However a state of excitement may be favourable to the development of genius—which is often of the nature of those seas, that become more luminous the more they are agitated,—for a student a far different mood is necessary; and in order ot reflect with clearness the images that study presents, the mind should have its surface level and unruffled.

The situation, indeed, of Sheridan was at this time particularly perplexing. He had won the heart, and even hand, of the woman he loved, yet saw his hopes of possessing her farther off than ever. He had twice risked his life against an unworthy antagonist, yet found the vindication of his honour still incomplete, from the misrepresentations of enemies, and the yet more mischievous testimony of friends. He felt within himself all the proud consciousness of genius, yet, thrown on the world without even a profession, looked in vain for a channel through which to direct its energies. Even the precarious hope which his father's favour held out, had been purchased by an act of duplicity which his conscience could not approve; for he had been induced, with the view, perhaps, of blinding his father's vigilance, not only to promise that he would instantly give up a pursuit so unpleasing to him, but to take "an oath equivocal" that he never would marry Miss Linley.

The pressure of these various anxieties upon so young and so ardent a mind, and their effects in alternately kindling and damping its spirit, could only have been worthily described by him who felt them; and there still exist some letters, which he wrote during this time, to a gentleman well known as one of his earliest and latest friends. I had hoped that such a picture, as these letters must exhibit, of his feelings at that most interesting period, of his private life, would not have been lost to the present work. But scruples—over-delicate, perhaps, but respectable, as founded upon a systematic objection to the exposure of *any* papers received under the seal of private friendship—forbid the publication of these precious documents. The reader must, therefore, be satisfied with the few distant glimpses of their contents, which are afforded by the answers of his correspondent, found among the papers entrusted to me. From these it appears, that through all his letters the same strain of sadness and despondency prevailed,—sometimes breaking out into aspirings of ambition, and sometimes rising into a tone of cheerfulness, which but ill concealed the melancholy under it. It is evident also, and not a little remarkable, that in none of these overflowings of his confidence had he as yet suffered the secret of his French marriage with Miss Linley to escape; and that his friend accordingly knew but half the wretched peculiarities of his situation. Like most lovers, too, imagining that every one who approached his mistress must be equally intoxicated with her beauty as himself, he seems anxiously to have cautioned his young correspondent (who occasionally saw her at Oxford and at Bath) against the danger that lay in such irresistible charms. From another letter, where the writer refers to some message, which Sheridan had requested him to deliver to Miss Linley, we learn, that she was at this time so strictly watched, as to be unable to achieve—what to an ingenious woman is seldom difficult—an answer to a letter which her lover had contrived to convey to her.

It was at first the intention of the elder Mr. Sheridan to send his daughters, in the course of this autumn, under the care of their brother Richard, to France. But, fearing to entrust them to a guardian, who seemed himself so much in need of direction, he altered his plan, and, about the beginning of October, having formed an engagement for the ensuing winter with the manager of the Dublin theatre, gave up his house in Bath, and set out with his daughters for Ireland. At the same time Mr. Grenville (afterwards Marquis of Buckingham), who had passed a great part of this and the preceding summer at Bath, for the purpose of receiving instruction from Mr. Sheridan in elocution, went also to Dublin on a short visit, accompanied by Mr. Cleaver, and by his brother Mr. Thomas Gren-

ville—between whom and Richard Sheridan an intimacy had at this period commenced, which continued with uninterrupted cordiality ever after.

Some time previous to the departure of the elder Mr. Sheridan for Ireland, having taken before a magistrate the depositions of the postilions who were witnesses of the duel at Kingsdown, he had earnestly entreated of his son to join him in a prosecution against Mathews, whose conduct on the occasion he and others considered as by no means that of a fair and honourable antagonist. It was in contemplation of a measure of this nature, that the account of the meeting already given was drawn up by Mr. Barnett, and deposited in the hands of Captain Wade. Though Sheridan refused to join in legal proceedings—from an unwillingness, perhaps, to keep Miss Linley's name any longer afloat upon public conversation—yet this revival of the subject, and the conflicting statements to which it gave rise, produced naturally in both parties a relapse of angry feelings, which was very near ending in a third duel between them. The authenticity given by Captain Paumier's name to a narrative which Sheridan considered false and injurious, was for some time a source of considerable mortification to him; and it must be owned, that the helpless irresolution of this gentleman during the duel, and his weak acquiescence in these misrepresentations afterwards, showed him as unfit to be trusted with the life as with the character of his friend.

How nearly this new train of misunderstanding had led to another explosion, appears from one of the letters already referred to, written in December, and directed to Sheridan at the Bedford Coffee-house, Covent-Garden, in which the writer expresses the most friendly and anxious alarm at the intelligence which he has just received,—implores of Sheridan to moderate his rage, and reminds him how often he had resolved never to have any concern with Mathews again. Some explanation, however, took place, as we collect from a letter dated a few days later; and the world was thus spared not only such an instance of inveteracy, as three duels between the same two men would have exhibited, but, perhaps, the premature loss of a life to which we are indebted, for an example as noble in its excitements, and a lesson as useful in its warnings, as ever genius and its errors have bequeathed to mankind.

The following Lent Miss Linley appeared in the oratorios at Covent-Garden; and Sheridan, who, from the nearness of his retreat to London, (to use a phrase of his own, repeated in one of his friend's letters,) "trod upon the heels of perilous probabilities," though prevented by the vigilance of her father from a private interview, had frequent opportunities of seeing her in public. Among many other

stratagems which he contrived, for the purpose of exchanging a few words with her, he more than once disguised himself as a hackney-coachman, and drove her home from the theatre.

It appears, however, that a serious misunderstanding at this time occurred between them,—originating probably in some of those paroxysms of jealousy, into which a lover like Sheridan must have been continually thrown, by the numerous admirers and pursuers of all kinds, which the beauty and celebrity of his mistress attracted. Among various alliances invented for her by the public at this period, it was rumoured that she was about to be married to Sir Thomas Clarges; and in the Bath Chronicle of April, 1773, a correspondence is given as authentic between her and "Lord Grosvenor," which, though pretty evidently a fabrication, yet proves the high opinion entertained of the purity of her character. The correspondence is thus introduced, in a letter to the editor:—"The following letters are confidently said to have passed between Lord G——r and the celebrated English syren, Miss L——y. I send them to you for publication, not with any view to encrease the volume of literary scandal, which I am sorry to say, at present needs no assistance, but with the most laudable intent of setting an example for our modern belles, by holding out the character of a young woman, who, notwithstanding the solicitations of her profession, and the flattering example of higher ranks, has added *incorruptible virtue* to a number of the most elegant qualifications."

Whatever may have caused the misunderstanding between her and her lover, a reconcilement was with no great difficulty effected, by the mediation of Sheridan's young friend, Mr. Ewart; and, at length, after a series of stratagems and scenes, which convinced Mr. Linley that it was impossible much longer to keep them asunder, he consented to their union, and on the 13th of April, 1773, they were married by license[1]—Mr. Ewart being at the same time wedded to a young lady with whom he also had eloped clandestinely to France, but was now enabled, by the forgiveness of his father, to complete this double triumph of friendship and love.

A curious instance of the indolence and procrastinating habits of Sheridan used to be related by Woodfall, as having occurred about this time. A statement of his conduct in the duels having appeared in one of the Bath papers, so false and calumnious as to require an immediate answer, he called upon Woodfall to request that his paper might be the medium of it. But wishing, as he said, that the public should have the whole matter fairly before them, he thought it

[1] Thus announced in the Gentleman's Magazine:—"Mr. Sheridan of the Temple to the celebrated Miss Linley of Bath."

right that the offensive statement should first be inserted, and in a day or two after be followed by his answer, which would thus come with more relevancy and effect. In compliance with his wish, Woodfall lost not a moment in transcribing the calumnious article into his columns—not doubting, of course, that the refutation of it would be furnished with still greater eagerness. Day after day, however, elapsed, and, notwithstanding frequent applications on the one side, and promises on the other, not a line of the answer was ever sent by Sheridan,—who, having expended all his activity in assisting the circulation of the poison, had not industry enough left to supply the antidote. Throughout his whole life, indeed, he but too consistently acted upon the principles which the first Lord Holland used playfully to impress upon his son :—"Never do to-day what you can possibly put off till to-morrow; nor ever do, yourself, what you can get any one else to do for you."

CHAPTER III.

Domestic circumstances—Fragments of Essays found among his papers. —Comedy of "the Rivals."—Answer to "Taxation no tyranny."—Farce of "St. Patrick's day."

A FEW weeks previous to his marriage, Sheridan had been entered a student of the Middle Temple. It was not, however, to be expected that talents like his, so sure of a quick return of fame and emolument, would wait for the distant and dearly-earned emoluments, which a life of labour in this profession promises. Nor, indeed, did his circumstances admit of any such patient speculation. A part of the sum which Mr. Long had settled upon Miss Linley, and occasional assistance from her father (his own having withdrawn all countenance from him), were now the only resources, beside his own talents, left him. The celebrity of Mrs. Sheridan as a singer was, it is true, a ready source of wealth; and offers of the most advantageous kind were pressed upon them, by managers of concerts both in town and country. But with a pride and delicacy, which received the tribute of Dr. Johnson's praise, he rejected at once all thoughts of allowing her to re-appear in public; and, instead of profiting by the display of his wife's talents, adopted the manlier resolution of seeking an independence by his own. An engagement had been made for her some months before by her father, to perform at the music-meeting that was to take place at Worcester this summer. But Sheridan, who considered that his own claims upon her superseded all others, would not suffer her to keep this engagement.

How decided his mind was upon the subject will appear from the

following letter, written by him to Mr. Linley about a month after his marriage, and containing some other interesting particulars, that show the temptations with which his pride had, at this time, to struggle :—

East Burnham, May 12, 1775.

"Dear Sir,

"I purposely deferred writing to you till I should have settled *all* matters in London, and in some degree settled ourselves at our little home. Some unforeseen delays prevented my finishing with Swale till Thursday last, when every thing was concluded. I likewise settled with him for his own account, as he brought it to me, and, for a *friendly* bill, it is pretty decent.—Yours of the 3d instant did not reach me till yesterday, by reason of its missing us at Morden. As to the principal point it treats of, I had given my answer some days ago to Mr. Isaac of Worcester. He had inclosed a letter to Storace for my wife, in which he dwells much on the nature of the agreement you had made for her eight months ago, and adds, that 'as this is no new application, but a request that you (Mr. S.) will fulfil a positive engagement, the breach of which would prove of fatal consequence to our Meeting, I hope Mr. Sheridan will think his honour in some degree concerned in fulfilling it.'—Mr. Storace, in order to enforce Mr. Isaac's argument, showed me his letter on the same subject to him, which begins with saying, 'We must have Mrs. Sheridan, somehow or other, if possible!'—the plain English of which is that, if her husband is not willing to let her perform, we will persuade him that he acts *dishonourably* in preventing her from fulfilling a *positive engagement*. This I conceive to be the very worst mode of application that could have been taken; as there really is not common sense in the idea that my *honour* can be concerned in my wife's fulfilling an engagement, which it is impossible she should ever have made.—Nor (as I wrote to Mr. Isaac) can you, who gave the promise, whatever it was, be in the least charged with the breach of it, as your daughter's marriage was an event which must always have been looked to by them as quite as natural a period to your right over her as her death. And, in my opinion, it would have been just as reasonable to have applied to you to fulfil your engagement in the latter case as in the former. As to the *imprudence* of declining this engagement, I do not think, even were we to suppose that my wife should ever on any occasion appear again in public, there would be the least at present. For instance, I have had a gentleman with me from Oxford (where they do not claim the least *right* as from an engagement), who has endeavoured to place the idea of my complimenting the University with Betsey's performance in the strongest light of advantage to me. This he said, on my declining to let her perform on any agreement. He likewise informed me, that he had just left Lord North (the Chancellor), who, he assured me, would look upon it as the highest compliment, and had expressed himself so to him. Now, should it be a point of inclination or convenience to me to break my resolution with regard to Betsey's performing, there surely would be more sense in obliging Lord North (and probably from *his own* application) and the Uni-

versity, than Lord Coventry and Mr. Isaac. For, were she to sing at Worcester, there would not be the least compliment in her performing at Oxford. Indeed, they would have a right to *claim it*—particularly, as that is the mode of application they have chosen from Worcester. I have mentioned the Oxford matter merely as an argument, that I can have no kind of inducement to accept of the proposal from Worcester. And, as I have written fully on the subject to Mr. Isaac, I think there will be no occasion for you to give any further reasons to Lord Coventry—only that I am sorry I cannot accept of his proposal, civilities, etc., and refer him for my motives to Mr. Isaac, as what I have said to you on the subject I mean for you only, and, if more remains to be argued on the subject in general, we must defer it till we meet, which you have given us reason to hope will not be long first.

"As this is a letter of business chiefly, I shall say little of our situation and arrangement of affairs, but that I think we are as happy as those who wish us best could desire. There is but one thing that has the least weight upon me, though it is one I was prepared for. But time, while it strengthens the other blessings we possess, will, I hope, add that to the number. You will know that I speak with regard to my father. Betsey informs me you have written to him again—have you heard from him? * * * * * * * * * * * *

"I should hope to hear from you very soon, and I assure you, you shall now find me a very exact correspondent; though I hope you will not give me leave to confirm my character in that respect before we meet.

"As there is with this a letter for Polly and you, I shall only charge you with mine and Betsey's best love to her, mother, and Tom, etc. etc. and believe me your sincere friend, and affectionate son,

"R. B. Sheridan."

At East Burnham, from whence this letter is dated, they were now living in a small cottage, to which they had retired immediately on their marriage, and to which they often looked back with a sigh in after-times, when they were more prosperous, but less happy. It was during a very short absence from this cottage, that the following lines were written by him :—

"Teach me, kind Hymen, teach—for thou
Must be my only tutor now,—
Teach me some innocent employ,
That shall the hateful thought destroy,
That I this whole long night must pass
In exile from my love's embrace.
Alas, thou hast no wings, oh Time[1]!
It was some thoughtless lover's rhyme,
Who, writing in his Cloe's view,
Paid her the compliment through you.
For had he, if he truly lov'd,
But once the pangs of absence prov'd,

[1] It will be perceived that the eight following lines are the foundation of the song "What hard, oh Time," in the Duenna.

He'd cropt thy wings, and, in their stead,
Have painted thee with heels of lead.
But 'tis the temper of the mind,
Where we thy regulator find.
Still o'er the gay and o'er the young
With unfelt steps you flit along,—
As Virgil's nymph o'er ripen'd corn,
With such etherial haste was borne,
That every stock, with upright head,
Denied the pressure of her tread.
But o'er the wretched, oh, how slow
And heavy sweeps thy scythe of woe!
Oppress'd beneath each stroke they bow,
Thy course engraven on their brow:
A day of absence shall consume
The glow of youth and manhood's bloom,
And one short night of anxious fear
Shall leave the wrinkles of a year.
For me who, when I'm happy, owe
No thanks to fortune that I'm so,
Who long have learned to look at one
Dear object, and at one alone,
For all the joy, or all the sorrow,
That gilds the day, or threats the morrow,
I never felt thy footsteps light,
But when sweet love did aid thy flight,
And, banish'd from his blest dominion,
I cared not for thy borrowed pinion.
True, she is mine, and, since she's mine,
At trifles I should not repine;
But oh, the miser's real pleasure
Is not in knowing he has treasure;
He must behold his golden store,
And feel, and count his riches o'er.
Thus I, of one dear gem possest,
And in that treasure only blest,
There every day would seek delight,
And clasp the casket every night.

Towards the winter they went to lodge for a short time with Storace, the intimate friend of Mr. Linley, and in the following year attained that first step of independence, a house to themselves;—Mr. Linley having kindly supplied the furniture of their new residence, which was in Orchard-Street, Portman-Square. During the summer of 1774, they passed some time at Mr. Canning's and Lord Coventry's; but, so little did these visits interfere with the literary industry of Sheridan, that, as appears from the following letter written to Mr. Linley in November, he had not only at that time finished his play of the Rivals, but was on the point of "sending a book to the press:"—

"Dear Sir, *Nov.* 17th, 1774.

"If I were to attempt to make as many apologies as my long omission in writing to you requires, I should have no room for any other subject. One excuse only I shall bring forward, which is, that I have been exceedingly employed, and I believe *very profitably*. However, before I explain how, I must ease my mind on a subject that much more nearly concerns me than any point of business or profit. I must premise to you that Betsey is now very well, before I tell you abruptly that she has encountered another disappointment, and consequent indisposition.* * * * However she is now getting entirely over it, and she shall never take any journey of the kind again. I inform you of this now, that you may not be alarmed by any accounts from some other quarter, which might lead you to fear she was going to have such an illness as last year, of which I assure you, upon my honour, there is not the least apprehension. If I did not write now, Betsey would write herself, and in a day she will make you quite easy on this head.

"I have been very seriously at work on a book, which I am just now sending to the press, and which I think will do me some credit, if it leads to nothing else. However, the profitable affair is of another nature. There will be a *Comedy* of mine in rehearsal at Covent-Garden within a few days. I did not set to work on it till within a few days of my setting out for *Crome*, so you may think I have not, for these last six weeks, been very idle. I have done it at Mr. Harris's (the manager's) own request; it is now complete in his hands, and preparing for the stage. He, and some of his friends, also who have heard it, assure me in the most flattering terms that there is not a doubt of its success. It will be very well played, and Harris tells me that the least shilling I shall get (if it succeeds) will be six hundred pounds. I shall make no secret of it towards the time of representation, that it may not lose any support my friends can give it. I had not written a line of it two months ago, except a scene or two, which I believe you have seen in an odd act of a little farce.

"Mr. Stanley was with me a day or two ago on the subject of the oratorios. I find Mr. Smith has declined, and is retiring to Bath. Mr. Stanley informed me that on his applying to the King for the continuance of his favour, he was desired by His Majesty to make me an offer of Mr. Smith's situation and partnership in them, and that he should continue his protection, etc.—I declined the matter very civilly and very peremptorily. I should imagine that Mr. Stanley would apply to you;—I started the subject to him, and said you had twenty Mrs. Sheridans more. However, he said very little:—if he does, and you wish to make an alteration in your system at once, I should think you may stand in Smith's place. I would not listen to him on any other terms, and I should think the King might be made to signify his pleasure for such an arrangement. On this you will reflect, and if any way strikes you that I can move in it, I need not add how happy I shall be in its success. * * *

"I hope you will let me have the pleasure to hear from you soon, as I shall think any delay unfair,—unless you can plead that you are writing an opera, and a folio on music beside. Accept Betsey's love and duty.

"Your sincere and affectionate

"R. B. Sheridan."

What the book here alluded to was, I cannot with any accuracy ascertain. Besides a few sketches of plays and poems, of which I shall give some account in a subsequent Chapter, there exist among his papers several fragments of Essays and Letters, all of which—including the unfinished plays and poems—must have been written by him in the interval between 1769, when he left Harrow, and the present year; though at what precise dates during that period there are no means of judging.

Among these are a few political Letters, evidently designed for the newspapers;—some of them but half copied out, and probably never sent. One of this description, which must have been written immediately on his leaving school, is a piece of irony against the Duke of Grafton, giving reasons why that nobleman should not lose his head, and, under the semblance of a defence, exaggerating all the popular charges against him.

The first argument (he says) of the Duke's adversaries "is founded on the regard which ought to be paid to justice, and on the good effects which, they affirm, such an example would have, in suppressing the ambition of any future minister. But, if I can prove that his —— might be made a much greater example of by being suffered to live, I think I may without vanity affirm that their whole argument will fall to the ground. By pursuing the methods which they propose, viz. chopping off his——'s head, I allow the impression would be stronger at first; but we should consider how soon that wears off. If, indeed, his——'s crimes were of such a nature, as to entitle his head to a place on Temple-Bar, I should allow some weight to their argument. But, in the present case, we should reflect how apt mankind are to relent after they have inflicted punishment;—so that, perhaps, the same men who would have detested the noble Lord while alive and in prosperity, pointing him as a scare-crow to their children, might, after being witnesses to the miserable fate that had overtaken him, begin in their hearts to pity him; and from the fickleness so common to human nature, perhaps, by way of compensation, acquit him of part of his crimes; insinuate, that he was dealt hardly with, and thus, by the remembrance of their compassion on this occasion, be led to show more indulgence to any future offender in the same circumstances." There is a clearness of thought and style here very remarkable in so young a writer.

In affecting to defend the Duke against the charge of fickleness and unpunctuality, he says, "I think I could bring several instances which should seem to promise the greatest steadiness and resolution. I have known him make the Council wait, on the business of the whole nation, when he has had an appointment to Newmarket. Surely, this is an instance of the greatest honour;—and, if we see

him so punctual in private appointments, must we not conclude that he is infinitely more so in greater matters? Nay, when W——'s[1] came over, is it not notorious that the late Lord Mayor went to His Grace on that evening, proposing a scheme which, by securing this fire-brand, might have put an end to all the troubles he has caused. But his Grace did not see him;—no, he was a man of too much honour;—he had *promised* that evening to attend Nancy Parsons to Ranelagh, and he would not disappoint her, but made three thousand people witnesses of his punctuality."

There is another Letter, which happens to be dated (1770), addressed to "Novus,"—some writer in Woodfall's Public Advertiser,—and appearing to be one of a series to the same correspondent. From the few political allusions introduced in this letter, (which is occupied chiefly in an attack upon the literary style of "Novus,") we can collect that the object of Sheridan was to defend the new ministry of Lord North, who had, in the beginning of that year, succeeded the Duke of Grafton. Junius was just then in the height of his power and reputation; and, as in English literature, one great voice always produces a multitude of echoes, it was thought at that time indispensable to every letter-writer in a newspaper, to be a close copyist of the style of Junius: of course, our young political tyro followed this "mould of form" as well as the rest. Thus, in addressing his correspondent:—"That gloomy seriousness in your style,—that seeming consciousness of superiority, together with the consideration of the infinite pains it must have cost you to have been so elaborately wrong,—will not suffer me to attribute such numerous errors to any thing but real ignorance, joined with most consummate vanity." The following is a specimen of his acuteness in criticising the absurd style of his adversary:—"You leave it rather dubious whether you were most pleased with the glorious opposition to Charles I, or the dangerous designs of that monarch, which you emphatically call 'the arbitrary projects of a Stuart's nature.' What do you mean by the projects of a man's *nature?* A man's natural disposition may urge him to the commission of some actions;—Nature may instigate and encourage, but I believe you are the first that ever made her a projector."

It is amusing to observe, that, while he thus criticises the style and language of his correspondent, his own spelling, in every second line, convicts him of deficiency in at least one common branch of literary acquirement:—we find *thing* always spelt *think;—whether, where*, and *which* turned into *wether, were*, and *wich;*—and double *m*'s and *s*'s almost invariably reduced to "single blessedness." This sign of a neglected education remained with him to a

[1] Wilkes.

very late period, and, in his hasty writing, or scribbling, would occasionally recur to the last.

From these Essays for the newspapers it may be seen how early was the bias of his mind towards politics. It was, indeed, the rival of literature in his affections during all the early part of his life; and, at length,—whether luckily for himself or not it is difficult to say,—gained the mastery.

There are also among his manuscripts some commencements of Periodical Papers, under various names, "The Detector," "The Dramatic Censor," etc.;—none of them, apparently, carried beyond the middle of the first number. But one of the most curious of these youthful productions is a Letter to the Queen, recommending the establishment of an Institution, for the instruction and maintenance of young females in the better classes of life, who, from either the loss of their parents or from poverty, are without the means of being brought up suitably to their station. He refers to the asylum founded by Madame de Maintenon, at St. Cyr, as a model, and proposes that the establishment should be placed under the patronage of Her Majesty, and entitled "The Royal Sanctuary." The reader, however, has to arrive at the practical part of the plan, through long and flowery windings of panegyric, on the beauty, genius, and virtue of women, and their transcendent superiority, in every respect, over men.

The following sentence will give some idea of the sort of eloquence, with which he prefaces this grave proposal to Her Majesty:—"The dispute about the proper sphere of women is idle. That men should have attempted to draw a line for their orbit, shows that God meant them for comets, and above our jurisdiction. With them the enthusiasm of poetry and the idolatry of love is the simple voice of nature." There are, indeed, many passages of this boyish composition, a good deal resembling in their style those ambitious apostrophes, with which he afterwards ornamented his speeches on the trial of Hastings.

He next proceeds to remark to Her Majesty, that in those countries where "man is scarce better than a brute, he shows his degeneracy by his treatment of women," and again falls into metaphor, not very clearly made out:—"The influence that women have over us is as the medium through which the finer Arts act upon us. The incense of our love and respect for them creates the atmosphere of our souls, which corrects and meliorates the beams of knowledge."

The following is in a better style:—"However in savage countries, where the pride of man has not fixed the first dictates of ignorance into law, we see the real effects of nature. The wild Huron shall, to the object of his love, become gentle as his weary rein-

deer;—he shall present to her the spoil of his bow on his knee;—shall watch without reward the cave where she sleeps;—he shall rob the birds for feathers for her hair, and dive for pearls for her neck;—her look shall be his law, and her beauties his worship!" He then endavours to prove that, as it is the destiny of man to be ruled by woman, he ought, for his own sake, to render her as fit for that task as possible:—"How can we be better employed than in perfecting that which governs us? The brighter they are, the more we shall be illumined. Were the minds of all women cultivated by inspiration, men would become wise of course. They are a sort of pentagraphs with which nature writes on the heart of man;—what *she* delineates on the original map will appear on the copy."

In showing how much less women are able to struggle against adversity than men, he says,—"As for us, we are born in a state of warfare with poverty and distress. The sea of adversity is our natural element, and he that will not buffet with the billows deserves to sink. But you, oh you, by nature formed of gentler kind, can *you* endure the biting storm? shall you be turned to the nipping blast, and not a door be open to give you shelter?"

After describing, with evident seriousness, the nature of the institutions of Madame de Maintenon, at St. Cyr, he adds the following strange romantic allusion: "Had such a charity as I have been speaking of existed here, the mild *Parthenia* and my poor *Laura* would not have fallen into untimely graves."

The practical details of his plan, in which it is equally evident that he means to be serious, exhibit the same flightiness of language and notions. The King, he supposes, would have no objection to "grant Hampton-Court, or some other palace, for the purpose;" and "as it is (he continues, still addressing the Queen,) to be immediately under Your Majesty's patronage, so should Your Majesty be the first member of it. Let the constitution of it be like that of a university,—Your Majesty, Chancellor; some of the first ladies in the kingdom sub-chancellors; whose care it shall be to provide instructors of real merit. The classes are to be distinguished by age,—none by degree. For, as their qualification should be gentility, they are all on a level. The instructors should be women, except for the languages. Latin and Greek should not be learned;—the frown of pedantry destroys the blush of humility. The practical part of the sciences, as of astronomy, etc. should be taught. In history they would find that there are other passions in man than love. As for novels, there are some I would strongly recommend; but romances infinitely more. The one is a representation of the effects of the passions as they should be, though extravagant; the other, as

they are. The latter is falsely called nature, and is a picture of depraved and corrupted society; the other is the glow of nature. I would therefore exclude all novels that show human nature depraved:—however well executed, the design will disgust."

He concludes by enumerating the various good effects, which the examples of female virtue, sent forth from such an institution, would produce upon the manners and morals of the other sex, and in describing, among other kinds of coxcombs, the cold, courtly man of the world, uses the following strong figure: "They are so clipped, and rubbed, and polished, that God's image and inscription is worn from them, and when He calls in his coin, He will no longer know them for his own."

There is still another Essay, or rather a small fragment of an Essay, on the Letters of Lord Chesterfield, which, I am inclined to think, may have formed a part of the rough copy of the book announced by him to Mr. Linley as ready in the November of this year. Lord Chesterfield's Letters appeared for the first time in 1774, and the sensation they produced was exactly such as would tempt a writer in quest of popular subjects to avail himself of it. As the few pages which I have found, and which contain merely scattered hints of thoughts, are numbered as high as 232, it is possible that the preceding part of the work may have been sufficiently complete to go into the printer's hands, and that there,—like so many more of his "unshelled brood,"—it died without ever taking wing. A few of the memorandums will, I have no doubt, be acceptable to the reader.

"Lord C.'s whole system in no one article calculated to make a great man.—A noble youth should be ignorant of the things he wishes him to know;—such a one as he wants would be *too soon* a man.

"Emulation is a dangerous passion to encourage, in some points, in young men; it is so linked with envy:—if you reproach your son for not surpassing his school-fellows, he will hate those who are before him.—Emulation not to be encouraged even in virtue. True virtue will, like the Athenian, rejoice in being surpassed; a friendly emulation cannot exist in two minds; one must hate the perfections in which he is eclipsed by the other; thus, from hating the quality in his competitor, he loses the respect for it in himself:— a young man by himself better educated than two.—A Roman's emulation was not to excel his countrymen, but to make his country excel: this is the true, the other selfish.—Epaminondas, who reflected on the pleasure his success would give his father, most glorious;—an emulation for that purpose, true.

"The selfish vanity of the father appears in all these letters—his sending the copy of a letter for his sister.—His object was the praise of his own mode of education.—How much more noble the affection of Morni in Ossian; 'Oh, that the name of Morni,' etc. etc.[1]

[1] "Oh that the name of Morni were forgot among the people! that the heroes

"His frequent directions for constant employment entirely ill founded:—a wise man is formed more by the action of his own thoughts than by continually feeding it. 'Hurry,' he says, 'from play to study; never be doing nothing'—I say, 'Frequently be unemployed; sit and think.'—*There are on every subject but a few leading and fixed ideas; their tracks may be traced by your own genius, as well as by reading*:—a man of deep thought, who shall have accustomed himself to support or attack all he has read, will soon find nothing new:—thought is exercise, and the mind like the body must not be wearied."

These last few sentences contain the secret of Sheridan's confidence in his own powers. His subsequent success bore him out in the opinions he thus early expressed, and might even have persuaded him that it was in consequence, not in spite, of his want of cultivation that he succeeded.

On the 17th of January, 1775, the comedy of The Rivals was brought out at Covent-Garden, and the following was the cast of the characters on the first night:—

Sir Anthony Absolute	*Mr. Shuter.*
Captain Absolute	*Mr. Woodward.*
Falkland	*Mr. Lewis.*
Acres	*Mr. Quick.*
Sir Lucius O'Trigger	*Mr. Lee.*
Fag	*Mr. Lee Lewes.*
David	*Mr. Dunstal.*
Coachman	*Mr. Fearon.*
Mrs. Malaprop	*Mrs. Green.*
Lydia Languish	*Miss. Barsanti.*
Julia	*Mrs. Bulkley.*
Lucy	*Mrs. Lessingham.*

This comedy, as is well known, failed on its first representation,—chiefly from the bad acting of Mr. Lee in Sir Lucius O'Trigger. Another actor, however, Mr. Clinch, was substituted in his place, and the play being lightened of this and some other incumbrances, rose at once into that high region of public favour, where it has continued to float so buoyantly and gracefully ever since.

The following extracts from letters written at that time by Miss Linley (afterwards Mrs. Tickell) to her sister, Mrs. Sheridan, though containing nothing remarkable, yet, as warm with the feelings of a moment so interesting in Sheridan's literary life, will be read, perhaps, with some degree of pleasure. The slightest outline of a celebrated place, taken on the spot, has often a charm beyond the most elaborate picture finished at a distance.

would only say, 'Behold the father of Gaul!'" Sheridan applied this, more than thirty years after, in talking of his own son, on the hustings of Westminster, and said that, in like manner, he would ask no greater distinction than for men to point at him and say, "There goes the father of Tom Sheridan."

"My dearest Eliza, *Bath.*

"We are all in the greatest anxiety about Sheridan's play,—though I do not think there is the least doubt of its succeeding. I was told last night that it was his own story, and therefore called "The Rivals;" but I do not give any credit to this intelligence.* * * * * * *

"I am told he will get at least 700*l.* for his play"

"*Bath, January*, 1775.

"It is impossible to tell you what pleasure we felt at the receipt, of Sheridan's last letter, which confirmed what we had seen in the newspapers of the success of his play. The *knowing ones* were very much disappointed, as they had so very bad an opinion of its success. After the first night we were indeed all very fearful that the audience would go very much prejudiced against it. But now, there can be no doubt of its success, as it has certainly got through more difficulties than any comedy which has not met its doom the first night. I know you have been very busy in writing for Sheridan,—I don't mean *copying*, but *composing*, — it's true, indeed;—you must not contradict me when I say you wrote the much-admired epilogue to the Rivals. How I long to read it! What makes it more certain is, that my *father* guessed it was *yours* the first time he saw it praised in the paper."

This statement respecting the epilogue would, if true, deprive Sheridan of one of the fairest leaves of his poetic crown. It appears, however, to be but a conjecture hazarded at the moment, and proves only the high idea entertained of Mrs. Sheridan's talents by her own family. The cast of the play at Bath, and its success there and elsewhere, are thus mentioned in these letters of Miss Linley:

"*Bath, February* 18, 1775.

"What shall I say of The Rivals!—a compliment must naturally be expected; but really it goes so far beyond any thing I *can* say in its praise, that I am afraid my modesty must keep me silent. When you and I meet I shall be better able to explain myself, and tell you how much I am delighted with it. We expect to have it *here* very soon:—it is now in rehearsal. You pretty well know the merits of our principal performers —I'll show you how it is cast.

Sir Anthony	*Mr. Edwin.*
Captain Absolute	*Mr. Didier.*
Falkland	*Mr. Dimond.*
(A new actor of great merit, and a sweet figure.)	
Sir Lucius	*Mr. Jackson.*
Acres	*Mr. Keasberry.*
Fag	*Mr. Brunsdon.*
Mrs. Malaprop	*Mrs. Wheeler.*
Miss Lydia	*Miss Wheeler.*
(Literally, a very pretty, romantic girl, of seventeen.)	
Julia	*Mrs. Didier.*
Lucy	*Mrs. Brett*

"There, Madam, do not you think we shall do your Rivals some justice? I'm convinced it won't be done better any where out of London. I don't think Mrs. Mattocks can do Julia very well."

"*Bath, March* 9, 1775.

"You will know by what you see enclosed in this frank my reason for not answering your letter sooner was, that I waited the success of Sheridan's play in Bath; for, let me tell you, I look upon our theatrical tribunal, though not in *quantity*, in *quality* as good as yours, and I do not believe there was a critic in the whole city that was not there. But, in my life, I never saw any thing go off with such uncommon applause. I must first of all inform you that there was a very full house:—the play was performed inimitably well; nor did I hear, for the honor of our Bath actors, one single prompt the whole night; but I suppose the poor creatures never acted with such shouts of applause in their lives, so that they were incited by that to do their best. They lost many of Malaprop's good sayings by the applause: in short, I never saw or heard any thing like it:—before the actors spoke, they began their clapping. There was a new scene of the N. Parade, painted by Mr. Davis, and a most delightful one it is, I assure you. Every body says,—Bowes in particular,—that yours in town is not so good. Most of the dresses were entirely new, and very handsome. On the whole, I think Sheridan is vastly obliged to poor dear Keasberry for getting it up so well. We only wanted a good Julia to have made it quite complete. You must know that it was entirely out of Mrs. Didier's style of playing: but I never saw better acting than Keasberry's,—so all the critics agreed."

Bath, August 22d, 1775.

"Tell Sheridan his play has been acted at Southampton:—above a hundred people were turned away the first night. They say there never was any thing so universally liked. They have very good success at Bristol, and have played The Rivals several times:—Miss Barsanti, Lydia, and Mrs. Canning, Julia."

To enter into a regular analysis of this lively play, the best comment on which is to be found in the many smiling faces that are lighted up around wherever it appears, is a task of criticism that will hardly be thought necessary. With much less wit, it exhibits perhaps more humour than The School for Scandal, and the dialogue, though by no means so pointed or sparkling, is, in this respect, more natural, as coming nearer the current coin of ordinary conversation; whereas, the circulating medium of The School for Scandal is diamonds. The characters of The Rivals, on the contrary, are *not* such as occur very commonly in the world; and, instead of producing striking effects with natural and obvious materials, which is the great art and difficulty of a painter of human life, he has here overcharged most of his persons with whims and absurdities, for which the circumstances they are engaged in afford but a very disproportionate vent. Accordingly, for our insight into their charac-

ters, we are indebted rather to their confessions than their actions. Lydia Languish, in proclaiming the extravagance of her own romantic notions, prepares us for events much more ludicrous and eccentric, than those in which the plot allows her to be concerned; and the young lady herself is scarcely more disappointed than we are, at the tameness with which her amour concludes. Among the various ingredients supposed to be mixed up in the composition of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, his love of fighting is the only one whose flavour is very strongly brought out; and the wayward, captious jealousy of Falkland, though so highly coloured in his own representation of it, is productive of no incident answerable to such an announcement:—the imposture which he practises upon Julia being perhaps weakened in its effect, by our recollection of the same device in the Nut-brown Maid and Peregrine Pickle.

The character of Sir Anthony Absolute is, perhaps, the best sustained and most natural of any, and the scenes between him and Captain Absolute are richly, genuinely dramatic. His surprise at the apathy with which his son receives the glowing picture which he draws of the charms of his destined bride, and the effect of the question, "And which is to be mine, Sir,—the niece or the aunt?" are in the truest style of humour. Mrs. Malaprop's mistakes, in what she herself calls "orthodoxy," have been often objected to as improbable from a woman in her rank of life; but, though some of them, it must be owned, are extravagant and farcical, they are almost all amusing,—and the luckiness of her simile, "as headstrong as an *allegory* on the banks of the Nile," will be acknowledged as long as there are writers to be run away with, by the wilfulness of this truly "headstrong" species of composition.

Of the faults of Sheridan both in his witty and serious styles—the occasional effort of the one, and the too frequent false finery of the other—some examples may be cited from the dialogue of this play. Among the former kind is the following elaborate conceit:—

"*Falk.* Has Lydia changed her mind? I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

"*Abs.* Ay, just as the eyes of a person who squints: when her love-eye was fixed on me, t'other—her eye of duty—was finely obliqued: but when puty bade her point that the same way, off turned t'other on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown."

This, though ingenious, is far too laboured—and of that false taste by which sometimes, in his graver style, he was seduced into the display of second-rate ornament, the following speeches of Julia afford specimens:—

"Then on the bosom of your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen

regret to slumbering; while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand, shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck the thorn from compunction."

Again;—"When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers; but ill-judging passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropt."

But, notwithstanding such blemishes,—and it is easy for the microscopic eye of criticism to discover gaps and inequalities in the finest edge of genius,—this play, from the liveliness of its plot, the variety and whimsicality of its characters, and the exquisite humour of its dialogue, is one of the most amusing in the whole range of the drama; and even without the aid of its more splendid successor, The School for Scandal, would have placed Sheridan in the first rank of comic writers.

A copy of The Rivals has fallen into my hands, which once belonged to Tickell, the friend and brother-in-law of Sheridan, and on the margin of which I find written by him in many places his opinion of particular parts of the dialogue[1]. He has also prefixed to it, as coming from Sheridan, the following humorous dedication, which, I take for granted, has never before met the light, and which the reader will perceive, by the allusions in it to the two Whig ministries, could not have been written before the year 1784:—

DEDICATION TO IDLENESS.

"My dear Friend,

"If it were necessary to make any apology for this freedom, I know you would think it a sufficient one, that I shall find it easier to dedicate my play to you than to any other person. There is likewise a propriety in prefixing your name to a work begun entirely at your suggestion, and finished under your auspices; and I should think myself wanting in gratitude to you, if I did not take an early opportunity of acknowledging the obligations which I owe you. There was a time—though it is so long ago that I now scarcely remember it, and cannot mention it without compunction—but there was a time, when the importunity of parents, and the example of a few injudicious young men of my acquaintance, had almost prevailed on me to thwart my genius, and prostitute my abilities by an application to serious pursuits. And if you had not opened my eyes to the absurdity

[1] These opinions are generally expressed in two or three words, and are, for the most part, judicious. Upon Mrs. Malaprop's quotation from Shakspeare, "Hesperian curls," etc. he writes, "overdone—fitter for farce than comedy." Acres's classification of oaths, "This we call the *oath referential*," etc. he pronounces to be "very good, but above the speaker's capacity." Of Julia's speech, "Oh woman, how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!" he remarks, "On the contrary, it seems to be of little consequence whether any person's judgment be weak or not, who wants resolution to act according to it."

and profligacy of such a perversion of the best gifts of nature, I am by no means clear that I might not have been a wealthy merchant or an eminent lawyer at this very moment. Nor was it only on my first setting out in life that I availed myself of a connection with you, though perhaps I never reaped such signal advantages from it as at that critical period. I have frequently since stood in need of your admonitions, and have always found you ready to assist me—though you were frequently brought by your zeal for me into new and awkward situations, and such as you were at first, naturally enough, unwilling to appear in. Amongst innumerable other instances, I cannot omit two, where you afforded me considerable and unexpected relief, and in fact converted employments usually attended by dry and disgusting business, into scenes of perpetual merriment and recreation. I allude, as you will easily imagine, to those cheerful hours which I spent in the Secretary of State's office and the Treasury, during all which time you were my inseparable companion, and showed me such a preference over the rest of my colleagues, as excited at once their envy and admiration. Indeed, it was very natural for them to repine at your having taught me a way of doing business, which it was impossible for them to follow—it was both original and inimitable.

"If I were to say here all that I think of your excellences, I might be suspected of flattery; but I beg leave to refer you for the test of my sincerity to the constant tenor of my life and actions; and shall conclude with a sentiment of which no one can dispute the truth, nor mistake the application—that those persons usually deserve most of their friends who expect least of them.

"I am, etc. etc. etc.

"R. B. Sheridan."

The celebrity which Sheridan had acquired, as the chivalrous lover of Miss Linley, was of course considerably increased by the success of The Rivals; and, gifted as he and his beautiful wife were with all that forms the magnetism of society,—the power to attract, and the disposition to be attracted, their life, as may easily be supposed, was one of gaiety both at home and abroad. Though little able to cope with the entertainments of their wealthy acquaintance, her music and the good company which his talents drew around him, were an ample repayment for the more solid hospitalities which they received. Among the families visited by them, was that of Mr. Coote (Purden), at whose musical parties Mrs. Sheridan frequently sung, accompanied occasionally by the two little daughters[1] of Mr. Coote who were the originals of the children introduced into Sir Joshua

[1] The charm of her singing, as well as her fondness for children, are interestingly described in a letter to my friend Mr. Rogers, from one of the most tasteful writers of the present day:—"Hers was truly 'a voice as of the cherub choir,' and she was always ready to sing without any pressing. She sung here a great deal, and to my infinite delight; but what had a peculiar charm was, that she used to take my daughter, then a child, on her lap, and sing a number of childish songs with such a playfulness of manner, and such a sweetness of look and voice, as was quite enchanting."

Reynolds's portrait of Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia. It was here that the Duchess of Devonshire first met Sheridan; and, as I have been told, long hesitated as to the propriety of inviting to her house two persons of such equivocal rank in society, as he and his wife were at that time considered. Her Grace was reminded of these scruples some years after, when "the player's son" had become the admiration of the proudest and fairest; and when a house, provided for the Duchess herself at Bath, was left two months unoccupied, in consequence of the social attractions of Sheridan, which prevented a party then assembled at Chatsworth from separating. These are triumphs which, for the sake of all humbly born heirs of genius, deserves to be commemorated.

In gratitude, it is said, to Clinch, the actor, for the seasonable reinforcement which he had brought to The Rivals, Mr. Sheridan produced this year a farce called "St. Patrick's Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant," which was acted on the 2d of May, and had considerable success.

Though we must not look for the usual point of Sheridan in this piece, where the hints of pleasantry are performed with the broad end or *mace* of his wit, there is yet a quick circulation of humour through the dialogue, — and laughter, the great end of farce, is abundantly achieved by it. The moralizing of Doctor Rosy, and the dispute between the justice's wife and her daughter, as to the respective merits of militia-men and regulars, are highly comic :—

"Psha, you know, Mamma, I hate militia officers; a set of dunghill cocks with spurs on—heroes scratch'd off a church-door. No, give me the bold upright youth who makes love to-day, and has his head shot off to-morrow. Dear! to think how the sweet fellows sleep on the ground, and fight in silk stockings and lace ruffles.

"*Mother.* Oh barbarous! to want a husband that may wed you to-day, and be sent the Lord knows where before night; then in a twelvemonth, perhaps, to have him come like a Colossus, with one leg at New-York and the other at Chelsea Hospital."

Sometimes, too, there occurs a phrase or sentence, which might be sworn to, as from the pen of Sheridan, any where. Thus, in the very opening :—

"*1st Soldier.* I say you are wrong; we should all speak together, each for himself, and all at once, that we may be heard the better.

"*2d Soldier.* Right, Jack, we'll *argue in platoons.*"

Notwithstanding the great success of his first attempts in the drama, we find politics this year renewing its claims upon his attention, and tempting him to enter into the lists with no less an antagonist than Dr. Johnson. That eminent man had just published

his pamphlet on the American question, entitled "Taxation no tyranny;"—a work, whose pompous sarcasm on the Congress of Philadelphia, when compared with what has happened since, dwindle into puerilities, and show what straws upon the great tide of events are even the mightiest intellects of this world. Some notes and fragments, found among the papers of Mr. Sheridan, prove that he had it in contemplation to answer this pamphlet; and, however inferior he might have been in style to his practised adversary, he would at least have had the advantage of a good cause, and of those durable materials of truth and justice, which outlive the mere workmanship, however splendid, of talent. Such arguments as the following, which Johnson did not scruple to use, are, by the haughtiness of their tone and thought, only fit for the lips of autocrats:—

"When they apply to our compassion, by telling us that they are to be carried from their own country to be tried for certain offences, we are not so ready to pity them, as to advise them not to offend. While they are innocent, they are safe.

"If they are condemned unheard, it is because there is no need of a trial. The crime is manifest and notorious," etc. etc.

It appears from the fragments of the projected answer, that Johnson's pension was one of the points, upon which Mr. Sheridan intended to assail him. The prospect of being able to neutralize the effects of his zeal, by exposing the nature of the chief incentive from which it sprung, was so tempting, perhaps, as to over-rule any feelings of delicacy, that might otherwhise have suggested the illiberality of such an attack. The following are a few of the stray hints for this part of his subject:—

"It is hard when a learned man thinks himself obliged to commence politician.—Such pamphlets will be as trifling and insincere as the venal quit-rent of a birth-day ode [1].

"Dr. J.'s other works, his learning and infirmities, fully entitled him to such a mark of distinction.—There was no call on him to become politician—The easy quit-rent of refined panegyric, and a few grateful rhymes or flowery dedications to the intermediate benefactor. * * * * *

"The man of letters is rarely drawn from obscurity by the inquisitive eye of a sovereign:—it is enough for Royalty to gild the laurelled brow, not explore the garret or the cellar.—In this case, the return will generally be ungrateful—the patron is most possibly disgraced or in opposition—if he (the author) follows the dictates of gratitude, he must speak his patron's language, but he may lose his pension—but to be a standing supporter of ministry, is probably to take advantage of that competence

[1] On another scrap of paper I find "the miserable quit-rent of an annual pamphlet." It was his custom in composition (as will be seen by many other instances) thus to try the same thought in a variety of forms and combinations, in order to see in which it would yield the greatest produce of wit.

against his benefactor.—When it happens that there is great experience and political knowledge, this is more excusable; but it is truly unfortunate where the fame of far different abilities adds weight to the attempts of rashness. * * * * * * *"

He then adds this very striking remark: "Men seldom think deeply on subjects on which they have no choice of opinion:—they are fearful of encountering obstacles to their faith (as in religion), and so are content with the surface."

Dr. Johnson says, in one part of his pamphlet, — "As all are born the subjects of some state or other, we may be said to have been all born consenting to some system of government." On this Sheridan remarks: — "This is the most slavish doctrine that ever was inculcated. If by our birth we gave a tacit bond for our acquiescence in that form of government under which we were born, there never would have been an alteration of the first modes of government—no Revolution in England."

Upon the argument derived from the right of conquest he observes: —"This is the worst doctrine that can be with respect to America. —If America is ours by conquest, it is the conquerors who settled there that are to claim these powers."

He expresses strong indignation at the "arrogance," with which such a man as Montesquieu is described as "the fanciful Montesquieu," by "an eleemosynary politician, who writes on the subject merely because he has been rewarded for writing otherwise all his lifetime."

In answer to the argument against the claims of the Americans, founded on the small proportion of the population that is really represented even in England, he has the following desultory memorandums:—"In fact every man in England is represented—every man can influence people, so as to get a vote, and even in an election votes are divided, each candidate is supposed equally worthy—as in lots—fight Ajax or Agamemnon [1].—This an American cannot do in any way whatever.

"The votes in England are perpetually shifting:—were it an object, few could be excluded.—Wherever there is any one ambitious of assisting the empire, he need not put himself to much inconvenience.—If the Doctor indulged his studies in Cricklade or Old Sarum, he might vote:—the dressing meat, the simplest proof of existence, begets a title.—His pamphlet shows that he thinks he can influence some one; not an anonymous writer in the paper but contributes his mite to the general tenor of opinion.—At the eve of an election, his Patriot [2] was meant to influence more

[1] He means to compare an election of this sort to the casting of lots between the Grecian chiefs in the 7th book of the Iliad.

[2] The name of a short pamphlet, published by Dr. Johnson, on the dissolution of parliament in 1774.

than the single voice of a rustic.—Even the mob, in shouting, give votes where there is not corruption."

It is not to be regretted that this pamphlet was left unfinished. Men of a high order of genius, such as Johnson and Sheridan, should never enter into warfare with each other, but, like the gods in Homer, leave the strife to inferior spirits. The publication of this pamphlet would most probably have precluded its author from the distinction and pleasure which he afterwards enjoyed in the society and conversation of the eloquent moralist who, in the following year, proposed him as a member of the Literary Club, and always spoke of his character and genius with praise. Nor was Sheridan wanting on his part with corresponding tributes; for, in a prologue which he wrote about this time to the play of Sir Thomas Overbury, he thus alludes to Johnson's Life of its unfortunate author:—

> "So pleads the tale, that gives to future times,
> The son's misfortunes, and the parent's crimes;
> There shall his fame, if own'd to-night, survive,
> Fix'd by the hand that bids our language live."

CHAPTER IV.

The Duenna.—Purchase of Drury Lane theatre.—The Trip to Scarborough.—Poetical Correspondence with Mrs. Sheridan.

Mr. Sheridan had now got into a current of dramatic fancy, of whose prosperous flow he continued to avail himself actively. The summer recess was employed in writing the Duenna; and his father-in-law, Mr. Linley, assisted in selecting and composing the music for it. As every thing connected with the progress of a work, which is destined to be long the delight of English ears, must naturally have a charm for English readers, I feel happy in being enabled to give, from letters written at the time by Mr. Sheridan himself to Mr. Linley, some details relating to their joint adaptation of the music, which, judging from my own feelings, I cannot doubt will be interesting to others.

Mr. Linley was at this time at Bath, and the following letter to him is dated in October, 1775, about a month or five weeks before the opera was brought out:—

"Dear Sir,

"We received your songs to-day, with which we are exceedingly pleased. I shall profit by our proposed alterations; but I'd have you to know that we are much too chaste in London to admit such strains as your Bath spring inspires. We dare not propose a peep beyond the ancle on any

account for the critics in the pit at a new play are much greater prudes than the ladies in the boxes. Betsey intended to have troubled you with some music for correction and I with some stanzas, but an interview with Harris to-day has put me from the thoughts of it, and bent me upon a much more important petition. You may easily suppose it is nothing else than what I said I would not ask in my last. But, in short, unless you can give us three days in town, I fear our opera will stand a chance to be ruined. Harris is extravagantly sanguine of its success as to plot and dialogue, which is to be rehearsed next Wednesday at the theatre. They will exert themselves to the utmost in the scenery, etc., but I never saw any one so disconcerted as he was at the idea of there being no one to put them in the right way as to music. They have no one there whom he has any opinion of—as to Fisher (one of the managers) he don't choose he should meddle with it. He entreated me in the most pressing terms to write instantly to you, and wanted, if he thought it could be of any weight, to write himself. Is it impossible to contrive this? could'nt you leave Tom[1] to superintend the concert for a few days? If you can manage it, you will really do me the greatest service in the world. As to the state of the music, I want but three more airs, but there are some glees and quintets in the last act, that will be inevitably ruined, if we have no one to set the performers at least in the right way. Harris has set his heart so much on my succeeding in this application, that he still flatters himself we may have a rehearsal of the music in Orchard Street to-morrow se'nnight. Every hour's delay is a material injury both to the opera and the theatre, so that if you can come and relieve us from this perplexity, the return of the post must only forerun your arrival; or (what will make us much happier) might it not bring *you?* I shall say nothing at present about the lady 'with the soft look and manner,' because I am full of more than hopes of seeing you. For the same reason I shall delay to speak about G—;[2] only this much I will say, that I am more than ever positive I could make good my part of the matter; but that I still remain an infidel as to G.'s retiring, or parting with his share, though I confess he *seems* to come closer to the point in naming his price.

"Your ever sincere and affectionate,
"R. B. Sheridan."

On the opposite leaf of this letter is written, in Mrs. S.'s hand-writing,—"Dearest Father, I shall have no spirits or hopes of the opera, unless we see you.

"Eliza Ann Sheridan"

In answer to these pressing demands, Mr. Linley, as appears by the following letter, signified his intention of being in town as soon as the music should be put in rehearsal. In the instructions here given by the poet to the musician, we may perceive that he somewhat apprehended, even in the tasteful hands of Mr. Linley, that predominance of harmony over melody, and of noise over both, which is so fatal to poetry and song, in their perilous alliance with an

[1] Mrs. Sheridan's eldest brother.
[2] Garrick.

orchestra. Indeed, those elephants of old, that used to tread down the ranks they were brought to assist, were but a type of the havoc that is sometimes made both of melody and meaning by the over-laying aid of accompaniments.

"Dear Sir,

"Mr. Harris wishes so much for us to get you to town, that I could not at first convince him that your proposal of not coming till the music was in rehearsal, was certainly the best as you could stay but so short a time. The truth is that what you mention of my getting a *master* to teach the performers is the very point where the matter sticks, there being no such person as a master among them. Harris is sensible there ought to be such a person; however, at present, every body sings there according to their own ideas, or what chance instruction they can come at. We are, however, to follow your plan in the matter; but can at no rate relinquish the hopes of seeing you in eight or ten days from the date of this; when the music (by the specimen of expedition you have given me) will be advanced as far as you mention. The parts are all writ out and doubled, etc. as we go on, as I have assistance from the theatre with me.

"My intention was to have closed the first act with a song, but I find it is not thought so well. Hence I trust you with one of the inclosed papers; and, at the same time, you must excuse my impertinence in adding an idea of the cast I would wish the music to have, as I think I have heard you say you never heard Leoni[1], and I cannot briefly explain to you the character and situation of the persons on the stage with him. The first (a dialogue between Quick and Mrs. Mattocks,)[2] I would wish to be a pert, sprightly air; for, though some of the words mayn't seem suited to it, I should mention that they are neither of them in earnest in what they say. Leoni takes it up seriously, and I want him to show himself advantageously in the six lines, beginning 'Gentle maid.' I should tell you, that he sings nothing well but in a plaintive or pastoral style; and his voice is such as appears to me always to be hurt by much accompaniment. I have observed, too, that he never gets so much applause as when he makes a cadence. Therefore my idea is, that he should make a flourish at 'Shall I grieve thee?' and return to 'Gentle maid,' and so sing that part of the tune again.[3] After that, the two last lines, sung by the three, with the persons only varied, may get them off with as much spirit as possible. The second act ends with a *slow* glee, therefore I should think the two last lines in question had better be brisk, especially as Quick and Mrs. Mattocks are concerned in it.

"The other is a song of Wilson's in the third act. I have written it to your tune, which you put some words to, beginning 'Prithee, prithee, pretty man!' I think it will do vastly well for the words: Don Jerome sings them when he is in particular spirits; therefore the tune is not too light, though it might seem so by the last stanza—but he does not mean

[1] Leoni played Don Carlos.

[2] Isaac and Donna Louisa.

[3] It will be perceived, by a reference to the music of the opera, that Mr Linley followed these instructions implicitly and successfully.

to be grave there, and I like particularly the returning to 'O the days when I was young!' We have mislaid the notes, but Tom remembers it. If you don't like it for words, will you give us one? but it must go back to 'O the days,' and be *funny*. I have not done troubling you yet, but must wait till Monday."

A subsequent letter contains further particulars of their progress.

"Dear Sir,

"Sunday evening next is fixed for our first musical rehearsal, and I was in great hopes we might have completed the score. The songs you have sent up of 'Banna's Banks,' and 'Deil take the wars,' I had made words for before they arrived, which answer excessively well; and this was my reason for wishing for the next in the same manner, as it saves so much time. They are to sing 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' just as you sing it (only with other words), and I wanted only such support from the instruments, or such joining in, as you should think would help to set off and assist the effort. I inclose the words I had made for 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' which will be sung, as a catch, by Mrs. Mattocks, Dubellamy [1], and Leoni. I don't mind the words not fitting the notes so well as the original ones. 'How merrily we live,' and 'Let's drink and let's sing,' are to be sung by a company of *friars* over their wine. [2] The words will be parodied, and the chief effect I expect from them must arise from their being *known*; for the joke will be much less for these jolly fathers to sing any thing new, than to give what the audience are used to annex the idea of jollity to. For the other things Betsey mentioned, I only wish to have them with such accompaniment as you would put to their *present* words, and I shall have got words to my liking for them by the time they reach me.

"My immediate wish at present is to give the performers their parts in the music (which they expect on Sunday night), and for any assistance the orchestra can give to help the effect of the glees, etc., that may be judged of and added at a rehearsal, or, as you say, on inquiring how they have been done; though I don't think it follows that what Dr. Arne's method is must be the best. If it were possible for Saturday and Sunday's post to bring us what we asked for in our last letters, and what I now enclose, we should still go through it on Sunday, and the performers should have their parts complete by Monday night. We have had our rehearsal of the speaking part, and are to have another on Saturday. I want Dr. Harrington's catch, but, as the sense must be the same, I am at a loss how to put other words. Can't the under part ('A smoky house, etc.') be sung by one person and the other two change? The situation is—Quick and Dubellamy, two lovers, carrying away Father Paul (Reinold) in great raptures, to marry them:—the Friar has before warned them of the ills of a married life, and they break out into this. The catch is particularly calculated for a stage effect; but I don't like to take another per-

[1] Don Antonio.

[2] For these was afterwards substituted Mr. Linley's lively glee, "This bottle's the sun of our table."

son's words, and I don't see how I can put others, keeping the same idea, ('of seven squalling brats, etc.') in which the whole affair lies. However, I shall be glad of the notes, with Reinold's part, if it is possible, as I mentioned [1].

"I have literally and really not had time to write the words of any thing more first and then send them to you, and this obliges me to use this apparently awkward way. * * * * * * * * * *

"My father was astonishingly well received on Saturday night in Cato: I think it will not be many days before we are reconciled.

"The inclosed are the words for 'Wind, gentle evergreen;' a passionate song for Mattocks[2], and another for Miss Brown[3], which solicit to be clothed with melody by you, and are all I want. Mattocks's I could wish to be a broken, passionate affair, and the first two lines may be recitative, or what you please, uncommon. Miss Brown sings hers in a joyful mood: we want her to show in it as much execution as she is capable of, which is prette well; and for variety, we want Mr. Simpson's hautboy to cut a figure, with replying passages, etc., in the way of Fisher's '*M'ami, il bel idol mio,*' to abet which I have lugged in 'Echo,' who is always allowed to play her part. I have not a moment more. Yours ever sincerely."

The next and last extract I shall give at present is from a letter, dated Nov. 2, 1775, about three weeks before the first representation of the opera.

"Our music is now all finished and rehearsing, but we are greatly impatient to see *you*. We hold your coming to be *necessary* beyond conception. You say you are at our service after Tuesday next; then 'I conjure you by that you do possess,' in which I include all the powers that preside over harmony, to come next Thursday night (this day se'nnight), and we will fix a rehearsal for Friday morning. From what I see of their rehearsing at present, I am become still more anxious to see you.

"We have received all your songs, and are vastly pleased with them. You misunderstood me as to the hautboy song; I had not the least intention to fix on '*Bel idol mio*.' However, I think it is particularly well adapted, and, I doubt not, will have a great effect." * * * * * *

An allusion which occurs in these letters to the prospect of a reconciliation with his father gives me an opportunity of mentioning a circumstance, connected with their difference, for the knowledge

[1] This idea was afterwards relinquished.

[2] The words of this song, in composing which the directions here given were exactly followed, are to be found in scarce any of the editions of the Duenna. They are as follows:—

Sharp is the woe, that wounds the jealous mind,
When treachery two fond hearts would rend;
But oh! how keener far the pang to find
That traitor in a bosom friend.

[3] "Adieu, thou dreary pile."

of which I am indebted to one of the persons most interested in remembering it, and which, as a proof of the natural tendency of Sheridan's heart to let all its sensibilities flow in the right channel, ought not to be forgotten. During the run of one of his pieces, having received information from an old family servant that his father (who still refused to have any intercourse with him) meant to attend, with his daughters, at the representation of the piece, Sheridan took up his station by one of the side scenes, opposite to the box where they sat, and there continued, unobserved, to look at them during the greater part of the night. On his return home, he was so affected by the various recollections that came upon him, that he burst into tears, and, being questioned as to the cause of his agitation by Mrs. Sheridan, to whom it was new to see him returning thus saddened from the scene of his triumph, he owned how deeply it had gone to his heart "to think that *there* sat his father and his sisters before him, and yet that he alone was not permitted to go near them or speak to them."

On the 21st of November, 1775, The Duenna was performed at Covent-Garden, and the following is the original cast of the characters, as given in the collection of Mr. Sheridan's Dramatic Works :—

Don Ferdinand	*Mr. Mattocks.*
Isaac Mendoza	*Mr. Quick.*
Don Jerome	*Mr. Wilson.*
Don Antonio	*Mr. Dubellamy.*
Father Paul	*Mr. Wewitzer.*
Lopez	*Mr. Watson.*
Don Carlos	*Mr. Leoni.*
Francis	*Mr. Fox.*
Lay Brother	*Mr. Baker.*
Donna Louisa	*Mrs. Mattocks.*
Donna Clara	*Mrs. Cargill*[1].
The Duenna	*Mrs. Green.*

The run of this opera has, I believe, no parallel in the annals of the drama. Sixty-three nights was the career of the Beggar's Opera; but the Duenna was acted no less than seventy-five times during the season, the only intermissions being a few days at Christmas, and the Fridays in every week;—the latter on account of Leoni, who, being a Jew, could not act on those nights.

In order to counteract this great success of the rival house, Garrick found it necessary to bring forward all the weight of his own best characters; and even had recourse to the expedient of playing off

[1] This is incorrect: it was Miss Brown that played Donna Clara for the first few nights.

the mother against the son, by reviving Mrs. Frances Sheridan's comedy of The Discovery, and acting the principal part in it himself. In allusion to the increased fatigue which this competition with The Duenna brought upon Garrick, who was then entering on his sixtieth year, it was said, by an actor of the day, that "the old woman would be the death of the old man."

The Duenna is one of the very few operas in our language, which combine the merits of legitimate comedy with the attractions of poetry and song;—that divorce between sense and sound, to which Dr. Brown and others trace the cessation of the early miracles of music, being no where more remarkable than in the operas of the English stage. The "Sovereign of the willing soul" (as Gray calls Music) always loses by being made exclusive sovereign,—and the division of her empire with poetry and wit, as in the instance of The Duenna, doubles her real power.

The intrigue of this piece (which is mainly founded upon an incident borrowed from the "Country Wife" of Wycherley) is constructed and managed with considerable adroitness, having just material enough to be wound out into three acts, without being encumbered by too much intricacy, or weakened by too much extension. It does not appear, from the rough copy in my possession, that any material change was made in the plan of the work, as it proceeded. Carlos was originally meant to be a Jew, and is called "Cousin Moses" by Isaac in the first sketch of the dialogue; but, possibly from the consideration that this would apply too personally to Leoni, who was to perform the character, its designation was altered. The scene in the second act, where Carlos is introduced by Isaac to the Duenna, stood, in its original state, as follows:—

"*Isaac.* Moses, sweet coz, I thrive, I prosper.

"*Moses.* Where is your mistress?

"*Isaac.* There, you booby, there she stands.

"*Moses.* Why she's damn'd ugly.

"*Isaac.* Hush! (*stops his mouth.*)

"*Duenna.* What is your friend saying, Don?

"*Isaac.* Oh, Ma'am, he's expressing his raptures at such charms as he never saw before.

"*Moses.* Aye, such as I never saw before indeed (*aside*).

"*Duenna.* You are very obliging, gentlemen; but, I dare say, Sir, your friend is no stranger to the influence of beauty, I doubt not but he is a lover himself.

"*Moses.* Alas! Madam, there is now but one woman living, whom I have any love for, and truly, Ma'am, you resemble her wonderfully.

"*Duenna.* Well, Sir, I wish she may give you her hand as speedily as I shall mine to your friend.

"*Moses.* Me her hand!—O Lord, Ma'am—she is the last woman in the world I could think of marrying.

" *Duenna.* What then, Sir, are you comparing me to some wanton—some courtezan?

" *Isaac.* Zounds! he durstn't.

" *Moses.* O not I, upon my soul.

" *Duenna.* Yes, he meant some young harlot—some—

" *Moses.* Oh, dear Madam, no—it was my mother I meant, as I hope to be saved.

" *Isaac.* Oh the blundering villain! (*aside.*)

" *Duenna.* How, Sir—am I so like your mother?

" *Isaac.* Stay, dear Madam—my friend meant—that you put him in mind of what his mother was when a girl—didn't you, Moses?

" *Moses.* Oh yes, Madam, my mother was formerly a great beauty, a great toast, I assure you;—and when she married my father about thirty years ago, as you may perhaps remember, Ma'am—

" *Duenna.* I, Sir! I remember thirty years ago!

" *Isaac.* Oh, to be sure not, Ma'am—thirty years! no, no—it was thirty months he said, Ma'am—wasn't it, Moses?

" *Moses.* Yes, yes, Ma'am—thirty months ago, on her marriage with my father, she was, as I was saying, a great beauty;—but catching cold, the year afterwards, in child-bed of your humble servant—

" *Duenna.* Of you, Sir!—and married within these thirty months!

" *Isaac.* Oh the devil! he has made himself out but a year old!—Come, Moses, hold your tongue:—You must excuse him, Ma'am—he means to be civil—but he is a poor, simple fellow—an't you, Moses?

" *Moses.* 'Tis true, indeed, Ma'am," etc. etc. etc.

The greater part of the humour of Moses here was afterwards transferred to the character of Isaac, and it will be perceived that a few of the points are still retained by him.

The wit of the dialogue, except in one or two instances, is of that accessible kind which lies near the surface—which may be enjoyed without wonder, and rather plays than shines. He had not yet searched his fancy for those curious fossils of thought, which make The School for Scandal such a rich museum of wit. Of this precious kind, however, is the description of Isaac's neutrality in religion—" like the blank leaf between the Old and New Testament." As an instance, too, of the occasional abuse of this research, which led him to mistake laboured conceits for fancies, may be mentioned the far-fetched comparison of serenaders to Egyptian embalmers " extracting the brain through the ears." For this, however, his taste, not his invention, is responsible, as we have already seen that the thought was borrowed from a letter of his friend Halhed.

In the speech of Lopez, the servant, with which the opera opens, there are, in the original copy, some humorous points, which appear to have fallen under the pruning knife, but which are not unworthy of being gathered up here :—

"A plague on these haughty damsels, say I:—when they play their airs on their whining gallants, they ought to consider that we are the chief sufferers,—we have all their ill-humours at second-hand. Donna Louisa's cruelty to my master usually converts itself into blows, by the time it gets to me:—she can frown me black and blue at any time, and I shall carry the marks of the last box on the ear she gave him to my grave. Nay, if she smiles on any one else, I am the sufferer for it:—if she says a civil word to a rival, I am a rogue and a scoundrel; and, if she sends him a letter, my back is sure to pay the postage."

In the scene between Ferdinand and Jerome (act. ii. scene 3.) the following lively speech of the latter was, I know not why, left out:—

"*Ferdin.*... but he has never sullied his honour, which, with his title, has outlived his means.

"*Jerome.* Have they? More shame for them!—What business have honour or titles to survive, when property is extinct? Nobility is but as a helpmate to a good fortune, and like a Japanese wife, should perish on the funeral pile of the estate!"

In the first act, too, (scene 3.) where Jerome abuses the Duenna, there is an equally unaccountable omission of a sentence, in which he compares the old lady's face to "parchment, on which Time and Deformity have engrossed their titles."

Though some of the poetry of this opera is not much above that ordinary kind, to which music is so often doomed to be wedded—making up by her own sweetness for the dulness of her helpmate—by far the greater number of the songs are full of beauty, and some of them may rank among the best models of lyric writing. The verses, "Had I a heart for falsehood framed," notwithstanding the stiffness of this word "framed," and one or two other slight blemishes, are not unworthy of living in recollection with the matchless air to which they are adapted.

There is another song, less known, from being connected with less popular music, which, for deep, impassioned feeling, and natural eloquence, has not, perhaps, its rival, through the whole range of lyric poetry. As these verses, though contained in the common editions of The Duenna, are not to be found in the opera, as printed in the British Theatre, and still more strangely, are omitted in the late Collection of Mr. Sheridan's Works[1], I should feel myself abundantly authorized in citing them here, even if their beauty were not a sufficient excuse for recalling them, under any circumstances, to the recollection of the reader:—

[1] For this Edition of his Works I am no further responsible than in having communicated to it a few prefatory pages, to account and apologize for the delay of the Life.

"Ah, cruel maid, how hast thou chang'd
The temper of my mind?
My heart, by thee from love estrang'd,
Becomes, like thee, unkind.

"By fortune favour'd, clear in fame,
I once ambitious was;
And friends I had who fann'd the flame,
And gave my youth applause.

"But now my weakness all accuse,
Yet vain their taunts on me;
Friends, fortune, fame itself I'd lose
To gain one smile from thee.

"And only thou should'st not despise
My weakness or my woe;
If I am mad in others' eyes,
'Tis thou hast made me so.

"But days, like this, with doubting curst,
I will not long endure—
Am I disdained—I know the worst
And likewise know my cure.

"If, false, her vows she dare renounce,
That instant ends my pain;
For, oh! the heart must break at once,
That cannot hate again."

It is impossible to believe that such verses as these had no deeper inspiration than the imaginary loves of an opera. They bear, burnt into every line, the marks of personal feeling, and must have been thrown off in one of those passionate moods of the heart, with which the poet's own youthful love had made him acquainted, and under the impression or vivid recollection of which these lines were written.

In comparing this poem with the original words of the air to which it is adapted (Parnell's pretty lines, "My days have been so wondrous free"), it will be felt, at once, how wide is the difference between the cold and graceful effusions of taste, and the fervid bursts of real genius—between the delicate product of the conservatory, and the rich child of the sunshine.

I am the more confirmed in the idea that this song was written previously to the opera, and from personal feeling, by finding among his earlier pieces the originals of two other songs—"I ne'er could any lustre see," and "What bard, oh Time, discover." The thought, upon which the latter turns, is taken from a poem already cited, addressed by him to Mrs. Sheridan in 1773; and the following is the passage that supplied the material:—

"Alas, thou hast no wings, oh Time,
It was some thoughtless lover's rhyme,

Who, writing in his Cloe's view,
Paid her the compliment through you.
For, had he, if he truly lov'd,
But once the pangs of absence prov'd,
He'd cropt thy wings, and, in their stead,
Have painted thee with heels of lead."

It will be seen presently, that this poem was again despoiled of some of its lines, for an epilogue which he began a few years after, upon a very different subject. There is something, it must be owned, not very sentimental in this conversion of the poetry of affection to other and less sacred uses—as if, like the ornaments of a passing pageant, it might be broken up after the show was over, and applied to more useful purposes. That the young poet should be guilty of such sacrilege to love, and thus steal back his golden offerings from the altar, to melt them down into utensils of worldly display, can only be excused by that demand upon the riches of his fancy, which the rapidity of his present career in the service of the dramatic muse occasioned.

There is not the same objection to the appropriation of the other song, which, it will be seen, is a selection of the best parts of the following Anacreontic verses :—

"I ne'er could any lustre see [1]
In eyes that would not look on me:
When a glance aversion hints,
I always think the lady squints.
I ne'er saw nectar on a lip,
But where my own did hope to sip.
No pearly teeth rejoice my view,
Unless a "yes" displays their hue—
The prudish lip, that *noes* me back,
Convinces me the teeth are black.
To me the cheek displays no roses,
Like that th' assenting blush discloses;
But when with proud disdain 'tis spread,
To me 'tis but a scurvy red.
Would she have me praise her hair?
Let her place my garland there.
Is her hand so white and pure?
I must press it to be sure;
Nor can I be certain then,
Till it grateful press again.
Must I praise her melody?
Let her sing of love and me.
If she choose another theme,

[1] Another mode of beginning this song in the MS:—
"Go tell the maid who seeks to move
My lyre to praise, my heart to love,
No rose upon her cheek can live,
Like those assenting blushes give."

I'd rather hear a peacock scream.
Must I, with attentive eye,
Watch her heaving bosom sigh?
I will do so, when I see
That heaving bosom sigh for me.
None but bigots will in vain
Adore a heav'n they cannot gain.
If I must religious prove
To the mighty God of Love,
Sure I am it is but fair
He, at least, should hear my prayer.
But by each joy of his I've known,
And all I yet shall make my own,
Never will I, with humble speech,
Pray to a heav'n I cannot reach."

In the song, beginning "Friendship is the bond of reason," the third verse was originally thus :—

"And, should I cheat the world and thee,
One smile from her I love to win,
Such breach of human faith would be
A sacrifice, and not a sin."

To the song "Give Isaac the nymph," there were at first two more verses, which, merely to show how judicious was the omission of them, I shall here transcribe. Next to the advantage of knowing what to put into our writings, is that of knowing what to leave out :

"To one thus accomplish'd I durst speak my mind,
And flattery doubtless would soon make her kind;
For the man that should praise her she needs must adore,
Who ne'er in her life received praises before.

"But the frowns of a beauty in hopes to remove,
Should I prate of her charms, and tell of my love;
No thanks wait the praise which she knows to be true,
Nor smiles for the homage she takes as her due."

Among literary piracies or impostures, there are few more audacious than the Dublin edition of the Duenna,—in which, though the songs are given accurately, an entirely new dialogue is substituted for that of Sheridan, and his gold, as in the barter of Glaucus, exchanged for such copper as the following :—

"*Duen.* Well, Sir, I don't want to stay in your house; but I must go and lock up my wardrobe.

"*Isaac.* Your wardrobe! when you came into my house you could carry your wardrobe in your combcase, you could, you old dragon."

Another specimen :—

"*Isaac.* Her voice too, you told me, was like a Virginian nightingale; why, it is like a cracked warming-pan :—and as for dimples!—to be sure, she has the devil's own dimples.—Yes! and you told me she had a lovely

down upon her chin, like the down of a peach; but, damn me if ever I saw such down upon any creature in my life, except once upon an old goat."

These jokes, I need not add, are all the gratuitous contributions of the editor.

Towards the close of the year 1775, it was understood that Garrick meant to part with his moiety of the patent of Drury-Lane Theatre and retire from the stage. He was then in the sixtieth year of his age, and might possibly have been influenced by the natural feeling, so beautifully expressed for a great actor of our own time by our greatest living writer :—

> —" Higher duties crave
> Some space between the theatre and the grave,
> That, like the Roman in the Capitol,
> I may adjust my mantle, ere I fall [1]."

The progress of the negotiation between him and Mr. Sheridan, which ended in making the latter patentee and manager, cannot better be traced than in Sheridan's own letters, addressed at the time to Mr. Linley, and most kindly placed at my disposal by my friend, Mr. William Linley.

" Dear Sir, *Sunday, Dec.* 31, 1775.

" I was always one of the slowest letter-writers in the world, though I have had more excuses than usual for my delay in this instance. The principal matter of business, on which I was to have written to you, related to our embryo negotiation with Garrick, of which I will now give you an account.

" Since you left town, Mrs. Ewart has been so ill, as to continue near three weeks at the point of death. This, of course, has prevented Mr. E. from seeing any body on business, or from accompanying me to Garrick's. However, about ten days ago, I talked the matter over with him by myself, and the result was, appointing Thursday evening last to meet him, and to bring Ewart, which I did accordingly. On the whole of our conversation that evening, I began (for the first time) to think him *really serious* in the business. He still, however, kept the reserve of giving the refusal to Colman, though at the same time he did not hesitate to assert his confidence that Colman would decline it. I was determined to push him on this point (as it was really farcical for us to treat with him under such an evasion), and at last he promised to put the question to Colman, and to give me a decisive answer by the ensuing Sunday (to-day).—Accordingly, within this hour, I have received a note from him which (as I meant to show it my father) I here transcribe for you.

"' *Mr. Garrick presents his compliments to Mr. Sheridan, and as he is obliged to go into the country for three days, he should be glad to see him upon his return to town, either on Wednesday about* 6 *or* 7 *o'clock or whenever he pleases. The party has no objection to the whole, but*

[1] Kemble's Farewell Address on taking leave of the Edinburgh stage, written by Sir Walter Scott.

chooses no partner but Mr. G.—Not a word of this yet. Mr. G. sent a messenger on purpose (i. e. *to Colman*).—*He would call upon Mr. S., but he is confined at home.—Your name is upon our list.*'

"This *decisive answer* may be taken two ways. However as Mr. G. informed Mr. Ewart and me, that he had no authority or pretensions to treat for *the whole*, it appears to me that Mr. Garrick's meaning in this note is, that Mr. Colman *declines* the purchase of *Mr. Garrick's share*, which is the point in debate, and the only part at present to be sold. I shall, therefore, wait on G. at the time mentioned, and if I understand him right, we shall certainly without delay appoint two men of business and the law to meet on the matter, and come to a conclusion without further delay.

"*According* to his demand, the whole is valued at 70,000*l*. He appears very shy of letting his books be looked into, as the test of the profits on this sum, but says it must be, in its nature, a purchase on speculation. However, he has promised me a rough estimate, of *his own*, of the entire receipts for the last seven years. But, after all, it must certainly be a *purchase on speculation*, without *money's worth* being *made out*. One point he solemnly avers, which is, that he will never part with it under the price above mentioned.

"This is all I can say on the subject till Wednesday, though I can't help adding, that I think we might *safely* give five thousand pounds more on this purchase than richer people. The whole valued at 70,000*l*., the annual interest is 3,500*l*; while this is *cleared*, the proprietors are *safe*, —but I think it must be *infernal* management indeed that does not double it.

"I suppose Mr. Stanley has written to you relative to your oratorio orchestra. The demand, I reckon, will be diminished one-third, and the appearance remain very handsome, which, if the other affair takes place, you will find your account in; and, if you discontinue your partnership with Stanley at Drury-Lane, the orchestra may revert to whichever wants it, on the other's paying his proportion for the use of it this year. This is Mr. Garrick's idea, and, as he says, might in that case be settled by arbitration.

"You have heard of our losing Miss Brown; however, we have missed her so little in the Duenna, that the managers have not tried to regain her, which I believe they might have done. I have had some books of the music these many days to send you down. I wanted to put Tom's name in the new music, and begged Mrs. L. to ask you, and let me have a line on her arrival, for which purpose I kept back the index of the songs. If you or he have no objection, pray, let me know.—I'll send the music to-morrow.

"I am finishing a two act comedy for Covent-Garden, which will be in rehearsal in a week. We have given the Duenna a respite this Christmas, but nothing else at present brings money. We have every place in the house taken for the three next nights, and shall, at least, play it fifty nights, with only the Friday's intermission.

"My best love and the compliments of the season to all your fire-side.

"Your grandson is a very magnificent fellow[1].

"Yours ever sincerely,

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

[1] Sheridan's first child, Thomas, born in the preceding year.

"Dear Sir, *January* 4, 1776.

"I left Garrick last night too late to write to you. He has offered Colman the refusal, and showed me his answer; which was (as in the note) that he was willing to purchase the whole, but would have no partner but Garrick. On this, Mr. Garrick appointed a meeting with his partner, young Lacy, and, in presence of their solicitor, treasurer, etc., declared to him that he was absolutely on the point of settling, and, if he was willing, he might have the same price for his share; but that if he (Lacy) would not sell, Mr. Garrick would, instantly, to another party. The result was, Lacy's declaring his intention of not parting with his share. Of this Garrick again informed Colman, who immediately gave up the whole matter.

"Garrick was extremely explicit, and, in short, we came to a final resolution. So that, if the necessary matters are made out to all our satisfactions, we may sign and seal a previous agreement within a fortnight.

"I meet him again to-morrow evening, when we are to name a day for a conveyancer on our side, to meet his solicitor, Wallace. I have pitched on a Mr. Phips, at the recommendation and by the advice of Dr. Ford. The three first steps to be taken are these,—our lawyer is to look into the titles, tenures, etc. of the house and adjoining estate, the extent and limitations of the patent, etc. We should then employ a builder (I think, Mr. Collins), to survey the state and repair in which the whole premises are, to which G. entirely assents. Mr. G. will then give us a fair and attested estimate from his books of what the profits have been, at an average, for these last seven years[1]. This he has shown me in rough, and valuing the property at 70,000*l*, the interest has exceeded ten per cent.

"We should, after this, certainly, make an interest to get the King's promise, that, while the theatre is well conducted, etc he will grant no patent for a third, - though G. seems confident that he never will. If there is any truth in profession and appearances, G. seems likely always to continue our friend, and to give every assistance in his power.

"The method of our sharing the purchase, I should think, may be thus,—Ewart, to take 10,000*l*, you, 10,000*l*., and I, 10,000*l*.—Dr. Ford agrees, with the greatest pleasure, to embark the other five; and, if you do not choose to venture so much, will, I dare say, share it with you. Ewart is preparing his money, and I have a certainty of my part. We shall have a very useful ally in Doctor Ford; and my father offers his services on our own terms We cannot unite Garrick to our interests too firmly; and I am convinced his influence will bring Lacy to our terms, if he should be ill-advised enough to desire to interfere in what he is totally unqualified for.

"I'll write to you to-morrow, relative to Lacy's mortgage (which Garrick has, and advises us to take), and many other particulars. When matters are in a certain train (which I hope will be in a week), I sup-

[1] These accounts were found among Mr. Sheridan's papers. Garrick's income from the theatre for the year 1775-6, is thus stated:—"Author, 400*l*., salary, 800*l*., manager, 500*l*."

pose you will not hesitate to come to town for a day or two. Garrick proposes, when we are satisfied with the bargain, to sign a previous article, with a penalty of ten thousand pounds on the parties who break from fulfilling the purchase. When we are once satisfied and determined in the business (which, I own, is my case), the sooner that is done the better. I must urge it particularly, as my confidential connexion with the other house is peculiarly distressing, till I can with prudence reveal my situation, and such a treaty (however prudently managed) cannot long be kept secret, especially as Lacy is now convinced of Garrick's resolution.

"I am exceedingly hurried at present, so, excuse omissions, and do not flag, when we come to the point. I'll answer for it, we shall see many golden campaigns.

"Yours ever,

"R. B. Sheridan."

"You have heard, I suppose, that Foote is likely never to show his face again."

"Dear Sir, *January 31st*, 1776.

"I am glad you have found a person who will let you have the money at 4 per cent. The security will be very clear; but, as there is some degree of risk, as in case of fire, I think 4 per cent. uncommonly reasonable.—It will scarcely be any advantage to pay it off, for your houses and chapel, I suppose, bring in much more. Therefore, while you can raise money at 4 per cent. on the security of your theatrical share *only*, you will be right to alter, as little as you can, the present disposition of your property.

"As to your quitting Bath, I cannot see why you should doubt a moment about it. Surely, the undertaking in which you embark such a sum as 10,000*l.* ought to be the chief object of your attention—and, supposing you did not chuse to give up all your time to the theatre, you may certainly employ yourself more profitably in London than in Bath. But, if you are willing (as I suppose you will be) to make the theatre the great object of your attention, rely on it you may lay aside every doubt of not finding your account in it; for the fact is, we shall have nothing but our own equity to consult in making and obtaining any demand for exclusive trouble. Lacy is utterly unequal to any department in the theatre. He has an opinion of me, and is very willing to let the whole burthen and ostensibility be taken off his shoulders. But I certainly should not give up my time and labour (for his superior advantage, having so much greater a share) without some exclusive advantage. Yet, I should by no means make the demand till I had shown myself equal to the task. My father purposes to be with us but one year; and that only to give me what advantage he can from his experience. He certainly must be paid for his trouble, and so certainly must you. You have experience and character equal to the line you would undertake; and it never can enter into any body's head that you were to give your time or any part of your attention gratis, because you had a share in the theatre. I have spoke on this subject both to Garrick and Lacy, and you will find no

demur on any side to your gaining a *certain* income from the theatre—greater, I think, than you could make out of it—and in this the theatre will be acting only for its own advantage. At the same time you may always make leisure for a few select scholars, whose interest may also serve the greater cause of your patentee-ship.

"I have had a young man with me who wants to appear as a singer in plays or oratorios. I think you'll find him likely to be serviceable in either. He is not one-and-twenty, and has no conceit. He has a good tenor voice—very good ear, and a great deal of execution, of the right kind. He reads notes very quick, and can accompany himself. This is Betsey's verdict, who sat in judgment on him on Sunday last. I have given him no answer, but engaged him to wait till you come to town.

"You must not regard the reports in the paper about a third theatre —that's all nonsense.

"Betsey's and my love to all. Your grandson astonishes every body by his vivacity, his talents for music and poetry, and the most perfect integrity of mind.

"Yours most sincerely,

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

In the following June the contract with Garrick was perfected; and, in a paper drawn up by Mr Sheridan many years after, I find the shares of the respective purchasers thus stated:—

Mr. Sheridan,	two fourteenths of the whole	10,000*l.*
Mr. Linley,	ditto — — —	10,000*l.*
Dr. Ford,	3 ditto — — —	15,000*l.*

Mr. Ewart, it will be perceived, though originally mentioned as one of the parties, had no concern in the final arrangement.

Though the letters, just cited, furnish a more detailed account than has yet been given to the public of this transaction by which Mr. Sheridan became possessed of his theatrical property, they still leave us in the dark with respect to the source, from which his own means of completing the purchase were derived. Not even to Mr. Linley, while entering into all other details, does he hint at the fountain-head from which this supply is to come;—

"—*gentes maluit ortus*
Mirari, quam nósse tuos."

There was, indeed, something mysterious and miraculous about all his acquisitions, whether in love, in learning, in wit or in wealth. How or when his stock of knowledge was laid in, nobody knew—it was as much a matter of marvel to those who never saw him read, as the existence of the chameleon has been to those who fancied it never eat. His advances in the heart of his mistress were, as we have seen, equally trackless and inaudible, and his triumph was the first that even rivals knew of his love. In like manner, the

productions of his wit took the world by surprize,—being perfected in secret, till ready for display, and then seeming to break from under the cloud of his indolence in full maturity of splendour. His financial resources had no less an air of magic about them; and the mode by which he conjured up, at this time, the money for his first purchase into the theatre, remains, as far as I can learn, still a mystery. It has been said that Mr. Garrick supplied him with the means—but a perusal of the above letters must set that notion to rest. There was evidently at this time no such confidential understanding between them as an act of friendship of so signal a nature would imply; and it appears that Sheridan had the purchase money ready, even before the terms upon which Garrick would sell were ascertained. That Doctor Ford should have advanced the money is not less improbable; for the share of which, contrary to his first intention, he ultimately became proprietor, absorbed, there is every reason to think, the whole of his disposable means. He was afterwards a sufferer by the concern to such an extent, as to be obliged, in consequence of his embarrassments, to absent himself for a considerable time from England; and there are among the papers of Mr. Sheridan, several letters of remonstrance addressed to him by the son of Dr. Ford, in which some allusion to such a friendly service, had it ever occurred, would hardly have been omitted.

About the end of this year some dissentions arose between the new patentees and Mr. Lacy, in consequence of the expressed intention of the latter to introduce two other partners into the establishment, by the disposal of his share to captain Thomson and a Mr. Langford. By an account of this transaction, which appears in a Periodical Paper published at the time [1], and which, from its correctness in other particulars, I rather think may be depended on, it would seem that Sheridan, in his opposition to Lacy, had proceeded to the extremity of seceding from his own duties at the theatre, and inducing the principal actors to adopt the same line of conduct.

"Does not the rage (asks this writer) of the new managers, all directed against the innocent and justifiable conduct of Mr. Lacy, look as if they meant to rule a theatre, of which they have only a moiety among them, and feared the additional weight and influence which would be given to Mr. Lacy by the assistance of Captain Thomson and Mr. Langford? If their intentions were right, why should they fear to have their power balanced, and their conduct examined? Is there a precedent in the annals of the theatre, where the acting manager deserted the general property, left the house, and seduced the actors from their duties—why? forsooth, because he was angry. Is not such conduct actionable? In any concern of common property, Lord Mansfield would make it so. And,

[1] The Selector.

what an insult to the public, from whose indulgence and favour this conceited young man, with his wife and family, are to receive their daily bread! Because Mr. Lacy, in his opinion, had used him ill—his patrons and benefactors might go to the devil! Mr. Lacy acted with great temper and moderation; and, in order that the public might not be wholly disappointed, he brought on old stock-plays—his brother-manager having robbed him of the means and instruments to do otherwise, by taking away the performers."

It is also intimated in the same publication that Mr. Garrick had on this occasion "given Mr. Sheridan credit on his banker for 20,000*l.* for law expenses or for the purchase of Messrs. Langford and Thomson's shares."

The dispute, however, was adjusted amicably. Mr. Lacy was prevailed upon to write an apology to the public, and the design of disposing of his share in the theatre was for the present relinquished.

There is an allusion to this reconciliation in the following characteristic letter, addressed by Sheridan to Mr. Linley in the spring of the following year.

"Dear Sir,

"You write to me though you tell me you have nothing to say—now, I have reversed the case, and have not wrote to you, because I have had so much to say. However, I find I have delayed too long to attempt now to transmit you a long detail of our theatrical manœuvres; but you must not attribute my not writing to idleness, but on the contrary to my *not* having been idle.

"You represent your situation of mind between *hopes* and *fears*. I am afraid I should argue in vain (as I have often on this point before) were I to tell you, that it is always better to encourage the former than the latter. It may be very prudent to mix a little *fear* by way of alloy with a good solid mass of *hope*; but you, on the contrary, always deal in *apprehension* by the pound, and take *confidence* by the grain, and spread as thin as leaf gold. In fact, though a metaphor mayn't explain it, the truth is, that, in all undertakings which depend principally on ourselves, the surest way not to fail is to *determine to succeed*.

"It would be endless to say more at present about theatrical matters, only, that every thing is going on very well. Lacy promised me to write to you, which I suppose, however, he has not done. At our first meeting after you left town, he cleared away all my doubts about his sincerity; and I dare swear we shall never have the least misunderstanding again, nor do I believe he will ever take any distinct council in future. Relative to your affair he has not the shade of an objection remaining, and is only anxious that you may not take amiss his boggling at first. We have, by and with the advice of the privy council, concluded to have Noverre over, and there is a species of pantomime to be shortly put on foot,

which is to draw all the human kind to Drury '. This is become absolutely necessary on account of a marvellous preparation of the kind which is making at Covent-Garden.

"Touching the tragedies you mention, if you speak of them merely as certain tragedies that may be had, I should think it impossible we could find the least room, as you know Garrick saddles us with one which we *must* bring out. But, if you have any particular desire that one of them should be done, it is another affair, and I should be glad to see them. Otherwise, I would much rather you would save me the disagreeableness of giving my opinion to a fresh tragic bard, being already in disgrace with about nine of that irascible fraternity.

"Betsey has been alarmed about Tom, but without reason. He is in my opinion better than when you left him, at least to appearance, and the cold he caught is gone. We sent to see him at Battersea, and would have persuaded him to remove to Orchard Street; but he thinks the air does him good, and he seems with people where he is at home, and may divert himself, which, perhaps, will do him more good than the air,—but he is to be with us soon.

"Ormsby has sent me a silver branch on the score of the Duenna. This will cost me, what of all things I am least free of, a letter: and it should have been a poetical one, too, if the present had been any piece of plate, but a candlestick!—I believe I must melt it into a bowl to make verses on it, for there is no possibility of bringing candle, candlestick, or snuffers, into metre. However, as the gift was owing to the muse, and the manner of it very friendly, I believe I shall try to jingle a little on the occasion; at least, a few such stanzas as might gain a cup of tea from the urn at Bath-Easton.

"Betsey is very well, and on the point of giving Tom up to feed like a Christian and a gentleman, or, in other words, of weaning, waining, or weening him. As for the young gentleman himself, his progress is so rapid, that one may plainly see the astonishment the sun is in of a morning, at the improvement of the night. Our loves to all.

"Yours ever, and truly,

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

The first contribution which the dramatic talent of the new manager furnished to the stock of the theatre, was an alteration of Vanbrugh's comedy, The Relapse, which was brought out on the 24th of February, 1777, under the title of "A Trip to Scarborough."

In reading the original play, we are struck with surprise, that Sheridan should ever have hoped to be able to *defecate* such dialogue, and yet leave any of the wit, whose whole spirit is in the lees, behind. The very life of such characters as Berinthia is their licentiousness, and it is with them, as with objects that are luminous from putrescence,—to remove their taint is to extinguish their

' I find that the pantomime at Drury-Lane this year was a revival of "Harlequin's Invasion," and that at Covent-Garden "Harlequin's Frolics."

light. If Sheridan, indeed, had substituted some of his own wit for that which he took away, the inanition that followed the operation would have been much less sensibly felt. But to be so liberal of a treasure so precious, and for the enrichment of the work of another, could hardly have been expected from him. Besides, it may be doubted whether the subject had not already yielded its utmost to Vanbrugh, and whether, even in the hands of Sheridan, it could have been brought to bear a second crop of wit. Here and there through the dialogue, there are some touches from his pen—more, however, in the style of his farce than his comedy. For instance, that speech of Lord Foppington, where, directing the hosier not "to thicken the calves of his stockings so much," he says, "You should always remember, Mr. Hosier, that if you make a nobleman's spring legs as robust as his autumnal calves, you commit a monstrous impropriety, and make no allowance for the fatigues of the winter." Again, the following dialogue :—

"*Jeweller.* I hope, my lord, those buckles have had the unspeakable satisfaction of being honoured with your lordship's approbation?

"*Lord F.* Why, they are of a pretty fancy; but don't you think them rather of the smallest?

"*Jeweller.* My lord, they could not well be larger, to keep on your lordship's shoe.

"*Lord F.* My good sir, you forget that these matters are not as they used to be: formerly, indeed, the buckle was a sort of machine, intended to keep on the shoe; but the case is now quite reversed, and the shoe is of no earthly use, but to keep on the buckle."

About this time Mrs. Sheridan went to pass a few weeks with her father and mother at Bath, while Sheridan himself remained in town, to superintend the concerns of the theatre. During this interval he addressed to her the following verses, which I quote, less from their own peculiar merit, than as a proof how little his heart had yet lost of those first feelings of love and gallantry which too often expire in matrimony, as Faith and Hope do in heaven, and from the same causes—

"One lost in certainty, and one in joy."

"*To Laura.*

"Near Avon's ridgy bank there grows
A willow of no vulgar size,
That tree first heard poor Silvio's woes,
And heard how bright were Laura's eyes.

Its boughs were shade from heat or show'r,
Its roots a moss-grown seat became;
Its leaves would strew the maiden's bow'r,
Its bark was shatter'd with her name!

Once on a blossom-crowned day
Of mirth-inspiring May
Silvio, beneath this willow's sober shade
In sullen contemplation laid,

Did mock the meadow's flowery pride,
Rail'd at the dance and sportive ring;—
The tabor's call he did deride,
And said, *it was not Spring.*

He scorn'd the sky of azure blue,
He scorn'd whate'er could mirth bespeak;
He chid the beam that drank the dew,
And chid the gale that fann'd his glowing cheek.
Unpaid the season's wonted lay,
For still he sigh'd, and said, it *was* not *May.*

"Ah, why should the glittering stream
"Reflect thus delusive the scene?
"Ah, why does a rosy-ting'd beam,
"Thus vainly enamel the green?
"To me nor joy nor light they bring
"I tell thee, Phœbus, *'tis not Spring.*

"Sweet tut'ress of music and love,
"Sweet bird, if 'tis thee that I hear,
"Why left you so early the grove,
"To lavish your melody here?
"Cease, then, mistaken thus to sing,
"Sweet nightingale! it *is* not *Spring.*

"The gale courts my locks but to tease,
"And, Zephyr, I call'd not on thee;
"Thy fragrance no longer can please,
"Then rob not the blossoms for me:
"But hence unload thy balmy wing,
"Believe me, Zephyr, 'tis *not Spring.*

"Yet the lily has drank of the show'r,
"And the rose 'gins to peep on the day;
"And yon bee seems to search for a flow'r,
"As busy as if it were May:—
"In vain, thou senseless flutt'ring thing,
"My heart informs me, *'tis not Spring.*"

May pois'd her roseate wings, for she had heard
The mourner, as she pass'd the vales along;
And, silencing her own indignant bird,
She thus reprov'd poor Silvio's song.

"How false is the sight of a lover;
"How ready his spleen to discover
"What reason would never allow!
"Why,—Silvio, my sunshine and show'rs,
"My blossoms, my birds, and my flow'rs,
"Were never more perfect than now.

"The water's reflection is true,
"The green is enamell'd to view,

" And Philomel sings on the spray;
" The gale is the breathing of spring,
" 'Tis fragrance it bears on its wing,
" And the bee is assur'd it is *May*."

" Pardon (said Silvio with a gushing tear),
" *'Tis* spring, sweet nymph, *but Laura is not here*."

In sending these verses to Mrs. Sheridan, he had also written her a description of some splendid party, at which he had lately been present, where all the finest women of the world of fashion were assembled. His praises of their beauty, as well as his account of their flattering attentions to himself, awakened a feeling of at least poetical jealousy in Mrs. Sheridan, which she expressed in the following answer to his verses—taking occasion, at the same time, to pay some generous compliments to the most brilliant among his new fashionable friends. Though her verses are of that kind which we read more with interest than admiration, they have quite enough of talent for the gentle themes to which she aspired; and there is, besides, a charm about them, as coming from Mrs. Sheridan, to which far better poetry could not pretend.

" *To Silvio.*

" Soft flow'd the lay by Avon's sedgy side,
While o'er its streams the drooping willow hung,
Beneath whose shadow Silvio fondly tried
To check the opening roses as they sprung.

In vain he bade them cease to court the gale,
That wanton'd balmy on the zephyr's wing;
In vain, when Philomel renew'd her tale,
He chid her song, and said, "*It was not Spring.*"

For still they bloom'd, tho' Silvio's heart was sad,
Nor did sweet Philomel neglect to sing;
The zephyrs scorn'd them not, tho' Silvio had,
For love and nature told them *it was Spring*[1].

* * * * * * * * * *

To other scenes doth Silvio now repair,
To nobler themes his daring Muse aspires;
Around him throng the gay, the young, the fair,
His lively wit the list'ning crowd admires.

And see, where radiant Beauty smiling stands,
With gentle voice and soft beseeching eyes,
To gain the laurel from his willing hands,
Her every art the fond enchantress tries.

What various charms the admiring youth surround,
How shall he sing, or how attempt to praise?
So lovely all—where shall the bard be found,
Who can to *one* alone attune his lays?

[1] As the poem altogether would be too long, I have here omitted five or six stanzas.

Behold with graceful step and smile serene,
Majestic Stella [1] moves to claim the prize;
"'Tis thine," he cries, "for thou art beauty's queen."
Mistaken youth and scest thou Myra's [2] eyes?

With beaming lustre see they dart at thee,
Ah! dread their vengeance—yet withhold thy hand,—
That deep'ning blush upbraids thy rash decree;
Her's is the wreath—obey the just demand.

"Pardon, bright nymph" (the wond'ring Silvio cries),
"And oh, receive the wreath thy beauty's due"—
His voice awards what still his hand denies,
For beauteous Amoret [3] now his eyes pursue.

With gentle step and hesitating grace,
Unconscious of her pow'r, the fair one came:
If, while he view'd the glories of that face,
Poor Silvio doubted,—who shall dare to blame?

A rosy blush his ardent gaze reprov'd,
The offer'd wreath she modestly declined;—
"If sprightly wit and dimpled smiles are lov'd,
"My brow," said Flavia [4], "shall that garland bind.

With wanton gaiety the prize she seized—
Silvio in vain her snowy hand repell'd;
The fickle youth unwillingly was pleas'd;
Reluctantly the wreath he yet withheld.

But Jessie's [5] all seducing form appears,
Nor more the playful Flavia could delight;
Lovely in smiles, more lovely still in tears,
Her every glance shone eloquently bright.

Those radiant eyes in safety none could view,
Did not those fringed lids their brightness shade—
Mistaken youths! their beams, too late ye knew,
Are by that soft defence more fatal made.

"O God of Love!" with transport Silvio cries,
"Assist me thou, this contest to decide:
"And since to *one* I cannot yield the prize,
"Permit thy slave the garland to divide.

"On Myra's breast the opening rose shall blow,
"Reflecting from her cheek a livelier bloom;
"For Stella shall the bright carnation glow—
"Beneath her eyes' bright radiance meet its doom.

"Smart pinks and daffodils shall Flavia grace,
"The modest eglantine and violet blue
"On gentle Amoret's placid brow I'll place—
"Of elegance and love an emblem true."

[1] According to the Key which has been given me, the name of Stella was meant to designate the Duchess of Rutland.
[2] The Duchess of Devonshire.
[3] Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Crewe.
[4] Lady Craven, afterwards Margravine of Anspach.
[5] The late Countess of Jersey.

In gardens oft a beauteous flow'r there grows,
By vulgar eyes unnotic'd and unseen;
In sweet security it humbly blows,
And rears its purple head to deck the green.

This flower, as nature's poet sweetly sings,
Was once milk-white, and *heart's-ease* was its name;
Till wanton Cupid pois'd his roseate wings,
A vestal's sacred bosom to inflame.

With treacherous aim the god his arrow drew,
Which she with icy coldness did repel;
Rebounding thence with feathery speed it flew,
Till on this lonely flow'r at last it fell.

Heart's-ease no more the wandering shepherds found,
No more the nymphs its snowy form possess,
Its white now chang'd to purple by Love's wound,
Heart's-ease no more, 'tis "Love in Idleness."

"This flow'r, with sweet-brier join'd, shall thee adorn,
"Sweet Jessie, fairest mid ten thousand fair!
"But guard thy gentle bosom from the thorn,
"Which, tho' conceal'd, the sweet-brier still must bear

"And place not Love, tho' *idle*, in thy breast,
"Tho' bright its hues, it boasts no other charm—
"So may thy future days be ever blest,
"And friendship's calmer joys thy bosom warm!"

But where does Laura pass her lonely hours?
Does she still haunt the grot and willow-tree?
Shall Silvio from his wreath of various flow'rs
Neglect to cull one simple sweet for thee?

"Ah Laura, no," the constant Silvio cries,
"For thee an ever-fading wreath I'll twine;
"Though bright the rose, its bloom too swiftly flies,
"No emblem meet for love so true as mine.

"For thee, my love, the myrtle, ever-green,
"Shall every year its blossom sweet disclose,
"Which, when our spring of youth no more is seen,
"Shall still appear more lovely than the rose."

"Forgive, dear youth," the happy Laura said,
"Forgive each doubt, each fondly anxious fear,
"Which from my heart for ever now is fled—
"Thy love and truth, thus tried, are doubly dear.

"With pain I mark'd the various passions rise,
"When beauty so divine before thee mov'd;
"With trembling doubt beheld thy wandering eyes,
"For still I fear'd;—alas! because I lov'd.

"Each anxious doubt shall Laura *now* forego,
"No more regret those joys so lately known,
"Conscious, that tho' thy breast to *all* may glow,
"Thy faithful *heart* shall beat for *her* alone.

" Then, Silvio, seize again thy tuneful lyre,
" Nor yet sweet Beauty's power forbear to praise,
" Again let charms divine thy strains inspire,
" And Laura's voice shall aid the poet's lays."

CHAPTER V.

The School for Scandal.

Mr. Sheridan was now approaching the summit of his dramatic fame;—he had already produced the best opera in the language, and there now remained for him the glory of writing also the best comedy. As this species of composition seems, more perhaps than any other, to require that knowledge of human nature and the world which experience alone can give, it seems not a little extraordinary that nearly all our first-rate comedies should have been the productions of very young men. Those of Congreve were all written before he was five-and-twenty. Farquhar produced the Constant Couple in his two-and-twentieth year, and died at thirty. Vanbrugh was a young ensign when he sketched out the Relapse and the Provoked Wife; and Sheridan crowned his reputation with the School for Scandal at six-and-twenty.

It is, perhaps, still more remarkable to find, as in the instance before us, that works which, at this period of life, we might suppose to have been the rapid offspring of a careless, but vigorous fancy,—anticipating the results of experience by a sort of second-sight inspiration,—should, on the contrary, have been the slow result of many and doubtful experiments, gradually unfolding beauties unforeseen even by him who produced them, and arriving at length, step by step, at perfection. That such was the tardy process by which the School for Scandal was produced, will appear from the first sketches of its plan and dialogue, which I am here enabled to lay before the reader, and which cannot fail to interest deeply all those who take delight in tracing the alchemy of genius, and in watching the first slow workings of the menstruum, out of which its finest transmutations arise.

"Genius," says Buffon, "is Patience;" or (as another French writer has explained his thought)—"La Patience cherche, et le Génie trouve;" and there is little doubt that to the co-operation of these two powers all the brightest inventions of this world are owing;——that Patience must first explore the depths where the pearl lies hid, before Genius boldly dives and brings it up full into light. There are, it is true, some striking exceptions to this rule; and our own times have witnessed more than one extraordinary intellect, whose depth has not prevented their treasures from lying ever ready within

reach. But the records of Immortality furnish few such instances; and all we know of the works that she has hitherto marked with her seal, sufficiently authorise the general position, that nothing great and durable has ever been produced with ease, and that Labour is the parent of all the lasting wonders of this world, whether in verse or stone, whether poetry or pyramids.

The first Sketch of the School for Scandal that occurs was written, I am inclined to think, before the Rivals, or at least very soon after it;—and that it was his original intention to satirise some of the gossips of Bath appears from the title under which I find noted down, as follows, the very first hints, probably, that suggested themselves for the dialogue.

"The Slanderers.—*A Pump-Room Scene.*

"Friendly caution to the newspapers.

"It is whispered——

"She is a constant attendant at church, and very frequently takes Dr. M'Brawn home with her.

"Mr. Worthy is very good to the girl;—for my part, I dare swear he has no ill intention.

"What! Major Wesley's Miss Montague?

"Lud, ma'am, the match is certainly broke—no creature knows the cause;—some say a flaw in the lady's character, and others, in the gentlemen's fortune.

"To be sure they do say——

"I hate to repeat what I hear.

"She was inclined to be a little too plump before she went.

"The most intrepid blush;—I've known her complexion stand fire for an hour together.

"'She had twins.'—How ill-natured! as I hope to be saved, ma'am, she had but one; and that a little starved brat not worth mentioning."

The following is the opening scene of his first Sketch, from which it will be perceived that the original plot was wholly different from what it is at present,—Sir Peter and Lady Teazle being at that time not yet in existence.

"Lady Sneerwell and Spatter."

"*Lady S.* The paragraphs, you say, were all inserted.

"*Spat.* They were, madam.

"*Lady S.* Did you circulate the report of Lady Brittle's intrigue with Captain Boastall?

"*Spat.* Madam, by this Lady Brittle is the talk of half the town; and in a week will be treated as a demirep.

"*Lady S.* What have you done as to the inuendo of Miss Niceley's fondness for her own footman?

"*Spat.* 'Tis in a fair train, ma'am. I told it to my hair-dresser,—he

courts a milliner's girl in Pall Mall, whose mistress has a first cousin who is waiting-woman to Lady Clackit. I think in about fourteen hours it must reach Lady Clackit, and then you know the business is done.

"*Lady S.* But is that sufficient, do you think?

"*Spat.* O Lud, ma'am, I'll undertake to ruin the character of the primest prude in London with half as much. Ha! ha! Did your ladyship never hear how poor Miss Shepherd lost her lover and her character last summer at Scarborough? this was the whole of it. One evening at Lady—'s, the conversation happened to turn on the difficulty of breeding Nova Scotia sheep in England. 'I have known instances,' says Miss——,'for last spring, a friend of mine, Miss Shepherd of Ramsgate, had a Nova Scotia sheep that produced her twins.'—'What!' cries the old deaf dowager Lady Bowlwell, 'has Miss Shepherd of Ramsgate been brought to bed of twins?' This mistake, as you may suppose, set the company a-laughing. However, the next day, Miss Verjuice Amarilla Lonely, who had been of the party, talking of Lady Bowlwell's deafness, began to tell what had happened; but, unluckily, forgetting to say a word of the sheep, it was understood by the company, and, in every circle, many believed, that Miss Shepherd of Ramsgate had actually been brought to bed of a fine boy and a girl; and, in less than a fortnight, there were people who could name the father, and the farm-house where the babies were put out to nurse.

"*Lady S.* Ha! ha! well, for a stroke of luck, it was a very good one. I suppose you find no difficulty in spreading the report on the censorious Miss——?

"*Spat.* None in the world,—she has always been so prudent and reserved, that every body was sure there was some reason for it at bottom.

"*Lady S.* Yes, a tale of scandal is as fatal to the credit of a prude as a fever to those of the strongest constitutions; but there is a sort of sickly reputation that outlives hundreds of the robuster character of a prude.

"*Spat.* True, ma'am, there are valetudinarians in reputation as in constitutions; and both are cautious from their appreciation and consciousness of their weak side, and avoid the least breath of air [1].

"*Lady S.* But, Spatter, I have something of greater confidence now to entrust you with. I think I have some claim to your gratitude.

"*Spat.* Have I ever shown myself one moment unconscious of what I owe you?

"*Lady S.* I do not charge you with it, but this is an affair of importance. You are acquainted with my situation, but not all my weaknesses. I was hurt, in the early part of my life, by the envenomed tongue of scandal, and ever since, I own, have no joy but in sullying the fame of others. In this I have found you an apt tool: you have often been the instrument of my revenge, but you must now assist me in a softer passion. A young widow with a little beauty and easy fortune is seldom

[1] This is one of the many instances, where the improving effect of revision may be traced. The passage at present stands thus:—"There are valetudinarians in reputation as well as constitution; who, being conscious of their weak part, avoid the least breath of air, and supply the want of stamina by care and circumspection.

driven to sue,—yet is that my case. Of the many you have seen here, have you ever observed me, secretly, to favour one?

"*Spat.* Egad! I never was more posed: I'm sure you cannot mean that ridiculous old knight, Sir Christopher Crab?

"*Lady S.* A wretch! his assiduities are my torment.

"*Spat.* Perhaps his nephew, the baronet, Sir Benjamin Backbite, is the happy man?

"*Lady S.* No, though he has ill-nature and a good person on his side, he is not to my taste. What think you of Clerimont [1]?

"*Spat.* How! the professed lover of your ward, Maria; between whom, too, there is a mutual affection.

"*Lady S.* Yes, that insensible, that doater on an idiot, is the man.

"*Spat.* But how can you hope to succeed?

Lady S. By poisoning both with jealousy of the other, till the credulous fool, in a pique, shall be entangled in my snare.

"*Spat.* Have you taken any measure for it?

"*Lady S.* I have. Maria has made me the confidente of Clerimont's love for her: in return, I pretended to entrust her with my affection for Sir Benjamin; who is her warm admirer. By strong representation of my passion, I prevailed on her not to refuse to see Sir Benjamin, which she once promised Clerimont to do. I entreated her to plead my cause, and even drew her in to answer Sir Benjamin's letters with the same intent. Of this I have made Clerimont suspicious; but 'tis you must inflame him to the pitch I want.

"*Spat.* But will not Maria, on the least unkindness of Clerimont, instantly come to an explanation?

"*Lady S.* This is what we must prevent by blinding" * * * * * * *

The scene that follows, between Lady Sneerwell and Maria, gives some insight into the use that was to be made of this intricate groundwork [2]; and it was, no doubt, the difficulty of managing such an involvement of his personages dramatically, that drove him, luckily for the world, to the construction of a simpler, and, at the same time, more comprehensive plan. He might also, possibly, have been influenced by the consideration, that the chief movement of this plot must depend upon the jealousy of the lover,—a spring of interest which he had already brought sufficiently into play in the Rivals.

"*Lady Sneerwell.* Well, my love, have you seen Clerimont to-day?

"*Maria.* I have not, nor does he come as often as he used. Indeed, madam, I fear what I have done to serve you has by some means come to

[1] Afterwards called Florival.

[2] The following is his own arrangement of the Scenes af the Second Act.

"Act. II. Scene 1st. All.—2nd. Lady S. and Mrs. C.—3d. Lady S. * * and Em. and Mrs. C. listening.—4th. L. S. and Flor. shows him into the room,—bids him return the other way.—L. S, and Emma.—Emma and Florival;—fits,—maid.—Emma fainting and sobbing:—'Death, don't expose me!'—enter maid,—will call out—all come in with cards and smelling-bottles."

is knowledge, and injured me in his opinion. I promised him faithfully never to see Sir Benjamin. What confidence can he ever have in me, if he once finds I have broken my word to him?

"*Lady S.* Nay, you are too grave. If he should suspect any thing, it will always be in my power to undeceive him.

"*Mar.* Well, you have involved me in deceit, and I must trust to you to extricate me.

"*Lady S.* Have you answered Sir Benjamin's last letter in the manner I wished?

"*Mar.* I have written exactly as you desired me; but I wish you would give me leave to tell the whole truth to Clerimont at once. There is a coldness in his manner of late, which I can no ways account for.

"*Lady S.* (*aside*) I'm glad to find I have worked on him so far;—fie, Maria, have you so little regard for me? would you put me to the shame of being known to love a man who disregards me? Had you entrusted me with such a secret, not a husband's power should have forced it from me. But, do as you please. Go, forget the affection I have shown you: forget that I have been as a mother to you, whom I found an orphan. Go, break through all ties of gratitude, and expose me to the world's derision, to avoid one sullen hour from a moody lover.

"*Mar.* Indeed, madam, you wrong me; and you who know the apprehension of love should make allowance for its weakness. My love for Clerimont is so great—

"*Lady S.* Peace; it cannot exceed mine.

"*Mar.* For Sir Benjamin, perhaps not, ma'am——and, I am sure, Clerimont has as sincere an affection for me.

"*Lady S.* Would to heaven I could say the same!

"*Mar.* Of Sir Benjamin:—I wish so too, ma'am. But I am sure you would be extremely hurt, if, in gaining your wishes, you were to injure me in the opinion of Clerimont.

"*Lady S.* Undoubtedly; I would not for the world — Simple fool (*aside*)! But my wishes, my happiness depend on you—for I doat so on the insensible, that it kills me to see him so attached to you. Give me but Clerimont, and——

"*Mar.* Clerimont!

"*Lady S.* Sir Benjamin, you know, I mean. Is he not attached to you? am I not slighted for you? Yet, do I bear any enmity to you, as my rival? I only request your friendly intercession, and you are so ungrateful, you would deny me that.

"*Mar.* Nay, madam, have I not done every thing you wished? For you, I have departed from truth, and contaminated my mind with falsehood—what could I do more to serve you?

"*Lady S.* Well, forgive me, I was too warm, I know you would not betray me. I expect Sir Benjamin and his uncle this morning—why, Maria, do you always leave our little parties?

"*Mar.* I own, madam, I have no pleasure in their conversation. I have myself no gratification in uttering detraction, and therefore none in hearing it.

"*Lady S.* Oh fie, you are serious—'tis only a little harmless raillery.

"*Mar.* I never can think that harmless which hurts the peace of youth, draws tears from beauty, and gives many a pang to the innocent.

"*Lady S.* Nay, you must allow that many people of sense and wit have this foible—Sir Benjamin Backbite, for instance.

"*Mar.* He may, but I confess I never can perceive wit where I see malice.

"*Lady S.* Fie, Maria, you have the most unpolished way of thinking! It is absolutely impossible to be witty without being a little ill-natured. The malice of a good thing is the barb that makes it stick. I protest now when I say an ill-natured thing, I have not the least malice against the person; and, indeed, it may be of one whom I never saw in my life; for I hate to abuse a friend—but I take it for granted, they all speak as ill-naturedly of me.

"*Mar.* Then you are, very probably, conscious you deserve it—for my part, I shall only suppose myself ill-spoken of when I am conscious I deserve it.

Enter Servant.

"*Ser.* Mrs. Candour.

"*Mar.* Well, I'll leave you.

"*Lady S.* No, no, you have no reason to avoid her, she is good nature itself.

"*Mar.* Yes, with an artful affectation of candour, she does more injury than the worst backbiter of them all.

Enter Mrs. Candour.

"*Mrs. Cand.* So, Lady Sneerwell, how d'ye do? Maria, child, how dost? Well, who is't you are to marry at last? Sir Benjamin or Clerimont. The town talks of nothing else."

Through the remainder of this scene the only difference in the speeches of Mrs. Candour is, that they abound more than at present in ludicrous names and anecdotes, and occasionally straggle into that loose wordiness, which, knowing how much it weakens the sap of wit, the good taste of Sheridan was always sure to lop away. The same may be said of the greater part of that scene of scandal, which at present occurs in the second Act, and in which all that is now spoken by Lady Teazle, was originally put into the mouths of Sir Christopher Crab and others—the caustic remarks of Sir Peter Teazle being, as well as himself, an after-creation.

It is chiefly, however, in Clerimont, the embryo of Charles Surface, that we perceive how imperfect may be the first lineaments that Time and Taste contrive to mould gradually into beauty. The following is the scene that introduces him to the audience, and no one ought to be disheartened by the failure of a first attempt after reading it. The spiritless language—the awkward introduction of the sister into the plot—the antiquated expedient [1] of dropping the

[1] This objection seems to have occurred to himself; for one of his memorandums is—"Not to drop the letter, but take it from the maid."

letter—all, in short, is of the most undramatic and most unpromising description, and as little like what it afterwards turned to as the block is to the statue, or the grub to the butterfly.

"*Sir B.* This Clerimont is, to be sure, the drollest mortal! he is one of your moral fellows, who does unto others as he would they should do unto him.

"*Lady Sneer.* Yet he is sometimes entertaining.

"*Sir B.* Oh hang him, no—he has too much good nature to say a witty thing himself, and is too ill-natured to praise wit in others.

Enter CLERIMONT.

"*Sir B.* So, Clerimont—we were just wishing for you to enliven us with your wit and agreeable vein.

"*Cler.* No, Sir Benjamin, I cannot join you.

"*Sir B.* Why, man, you look as grave as a young lover the first time he is jilted.

"*Cler.* I have some cause to be grave, Sir Benjamin. A word with you all. I have just received a letter from the country, in which I understand that my sister has suddenly left my uncle's house, and has not since been heard of.

"*Lady S.* Indeed! and on what provocation?

"*Cler.* It seems they were urging her a little too hastily to marry some country squire that was not to her taste.

"*Sir B.* Positively I love her for her spirit.

"*Lady S.* And so do I, and would protect her, if I knew where she was.

"*Cler.* Sir Benjamin, a word with you—(*takes him apart*).—I think, sir, we have lived for some years on what the world calls the footing of friends.

"*Sir B.* To my great honour, sir.—Well, my dear friend?

"*Cler.* You know that you once paid your addresses to my sister. My uncle disliked you; but I have reason to think you were not indifferent to her.

"*Sir B.* I believe you are pretty right there; but what follows?

"*Cler.* Then I think I have a right to expect an implicit answer from you, whether you are in any respect privy to her elopement?

"*Sir B.* Why, you certainly have a right to ask the question, and I will answer you as sincerely—which is, that though I make no doubt but that she would have gone with me to the world's end, I am at present entirely ignorant of the whole affair. This I declare to you upon my honour—and, what is more, I assure you my devotions are at present paid to another lady—one of your acquaintance, too.

"*Cler.* (*aside*). Now, who can this other be whom he alludes to?—I have sometimes thought I perceived a kind of mystery between him and Maria—but I rely on her promise, though, of late, her conduct to me has been strangely reserved.

"*Lady S.* Why, Clerimont, you seem quite thoughtful. Come with us; we are going to kill an hour at ombre—your mistress will join us.

"*Cler.* Madam, I attend you.

"*Lady S.* (*Taking Sir B. aside*). Sir Benjamin, I see Maria is now coming to join us—do you detain her awhile, and I will contrive that Clerimont should see you, and then drop this letter. [*Exeunt all but Sir B.*

Enter MARIA.

"*Mar.* I thought the company were here, and Clerimont—

"*Sir B.* One, more your slave than Clerimont, is here.

"*Mar.* Dear Sir Benjamin, I thought you promised me to drop this subject. If I have really any power over you, you will oblige me—

"*Sir B.* Power over me! What is there you could not command me in? Have you not wrought on me to proffer my love to Lady Sneerwell? Yet though you gain this from me, you will not give me the smallest token of gratitude.

Enter CLERIMONT *behind.*

"*Mar.* How can I believe your love sincere, when you continue still to importune me?

"*Sir B.* I ask but for your friendship, your esteem.

"*Mar.* That you shall ever be entitled to—then I may depend upon your honour?

"*Sir B.* Eternally—dispose of my heart as you please.

"*Mar.* Depend upon it I shall study nothing but its happiness. I need not repeat my caution as to Clerimont?

"*Sir B.* No, no, he suspects nothing as yet.

"*Mar.* For, within these few days, I almost believed that he suspects me.

"*Sir B.* Never fear, he does not love well enough to be quick sighted; for just now he taxed me with eloping with his sister.

"*Mar.* Well, we had now best join the company. [*Exeunt.*

"*Cler.* So, now—who can ever have faith in woman? D—d deceitful wanton! why did she not fairly tell me that she was weary of my addresses? that woman, like her mind, was changed, and another fool succeeded.

Enter LADY SNEERWELL.

"*Lady S.* Clerimont, why do you leave us? Think of my losing this hand—(*Cler.* She has no heart.)—five mate—(*Cler.* Deceitful wanton!) —spadille.

"*Cler.* Oh yes, ma'am—'twas very hard.

"*Lady S.* But you seem disturbed; and where are Maria and Sir Benjamin? I vow I shall be jealous of Sir Benjamin.

"*Cler.* I dare swear they are together very happy—but, Lady Sneerwell—you may perhaps often have perceived that I am discontented with Maria. I ask you to tell me sincerely—have you ever perceived it?

"*Lady S.* I wish you would excuse me.

"*Cler.* Nay, you have perceived it—I know you hate deceit." * * * *

I have said that the other Sketch, in which Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are made the leading personages, was written subsequently to that of which I have just given specimens. Of this, however, I cannot

produce any positive proof. There is no date on the manuscripts, nor any other certain clue, to assist in deciding the precedency of time between them. In addition to this, the two plans are entirely distinct,—Lady Sneerwell and her associates being as wholly excluded from the one, as Sir Peter and Lady Teazle are from the other; so that it is difficult to say, with certainty, which existed first, or at what time the happy thought occurred of blending all that was best in each into one.

The following are the Dramatis Personæ of the second plan :—

Sir Rowland Harpur.
—Plausible.
Capt. Harry Plausible.
Freeman.
Old Teazle [1]. (*Left off trade.*)
Mrs. Teazle.
Maria.

From this list of the personages we may conclude that the quarrels of Old Teazle and his wife, the attachment between Maria and one of the Plausibles, and the intrigue of Mrs. Teazle with the other, formed the sole materials of the piece, as then constructed [2]. There is reason too to believe, from the following memorandum, which occurs in various shapes through these manuscripts, that the device of the screen was not yet thought of, and that the discovery was to be effected in a very different manner—

"Making love to aunt and niece—meeting wrong in the dark—some one coming—locks up the aunt, thinking it to be the niece."

I shall now give a scene or two from the Second Sketch—which shows, perhaps, even more strikingly than the other, the volatilising and condensing process which his wit must have gone through, before it attained its present proof and flavour.

"ACT I.—SCENE I.

OLD TEAZLE, *alone.*

"In the year 44, I married my first wife; the wedding was at the end

[1] The first intention was, as appears from his introductory speech, to give Old Teazle the Christian name of Solomon. Sheridan was, indeed, most fastidiously changeful in his names. The present Charles Surface was at first Clerimont, then Florival, then Captain Harry Plausible, then Harry Pliant or Pliable, then Young Harrier, and then Frank—while his elder brother was successively Plausible, Pliable, Young Pliant, Tom, and, lastly, Joseph Surface. Trip was originally called Spunge; the name of Snake was, in the earlier sketch, Spatter, and, even after the union of the two plots into one, all the business of the opening scene with Lady Sneerwell, at present transacted by Snake, was given to a character, afterwards wholly omitted, Miss Verjuice.

[2] This was most probably the "two act Comedy," which he announced to Mr. Linley as preparing for representation in 1775.

of the year—aye, 'twas in December; yet, before Ann. Dom. 45, I repented. A month before, we swore we preferred each other to the whole world—perhaps we spoke truth; but when we came to promise to love each other till death, there I am sure we lied. Well, Fortune owed me a good turn; in 48 she died. Ah, silly Solomon, in 52 I find thee married again! Here, too, is a catalogue of ills—Thomas, born February 12; Jane, born. Jan. 6; so they go on to the number of five. However, by death I stand credited but by one. Well, Margery, rest her soul! was a queer creature; when she was gone, I felt awkward at first, and being sensible that wishes availed nothing, I often wished for her return. For ten years more I kept my senses and lived single. Oh, blockhead, dolt Solomon! within this twelvemonth thou art married again—married to a woman thirty years younger than thyself; a fashionable woman. Yet I took her with caution; she had been educated in the country; but now she has more extravagance than the daughter of an Earl, more levity than a Countess. What a defect it is in our laws, that a man who has once been branded in the forehead should be hanged for the second offence.

Enter Jarvis.

"*Teaz.* Who's there? Well, Jarvis?

"*Jarv.* Sir, there are a number of my mistress's tradesmen without, clamorous for their money.

"*Teaz.* Are those their bills in your hand?

"*Jarv.* Something about a twentieth part, sir.

"*Teaz.* What! have you expended the hundred pounds I gave you for her use?

"*Jarv.* Long ago, sir, as you may judge by some of the items:—'Paid the coach-maker for lowering the front seat of the coach.'

"*Teaz.* What the deuce was the matter with the seat?

"*Jarv.* Oh lord, the carriage was too low for her by a foot when she was dressed—so that it must have been so, or have had a tub at top like a hat-case on a travelling trunk. Well, sir (*reads*) 'Paid her two footmen half a year's wages, 5*ol.*'

"*Teaz.* 'Sdeath and fury! does she give her footmen a hundred a-year?

"*Jarv.* Yes, sir, and I think, indeed, she has rather made a good bargain, for they find their own bags and bouquets.

"*Teaz.* Bags and bouquets for footmen!—halters and bastinadoes[1]!

"*Jarv.* 'Paid for my lady's own nosegays, 5*ol.*'

"*Teaz.* Fifty pounds for flowers! enough to turn the Pantheon into a green-house, and give a Fête Champêtre at Christmas.

"[2] *Lady Teaz.* Lord, Sir Peter, I wonder you should grudge me the most innocent articles in dress—and then, for the expense—flowers cannot be cheaper in winter—you should find fault with the climate, and not with me. I am sure I wish with all my heart, that it was Spring all the year round, and that roses grew under one's feet.

[1] Transferred afterwards to Trip and Sir Oliver.

[2] We observe here a change in his plan, with respect both to the titles of Old Teazle and his wife, and the presence of the latter during this scene, which was evidently not at first intended.

From the following skeleton of the scenes of this piece, it would appear that

"*Sir P.* Nay, but, madam, then you would not wear them; but try snow-balls, and icicles. But tell me, madam, how can you feel any satisfaction in wearing these, when you might reflect that one of the rose-buds would have furnished a poor family with a dinner?

"*Lady T.* Upon my word, Sir Peter, begging your pardon, that is a very absurd way of arguing. By that rule, why do you indulge in the least superfluity? I dare swear a beggar might dine tolerably on your great-coat, or sup off your laced waistcoat—nay, I dare say, he wouldn't eat your gold-headed cane in a week. Indeed, if you would reserve nothing but necessaries, you should give the first poor man you meet your wig, and walk the streets in your night-cap, which, you know, becomes you very much.

"*Sir P.* Well, go on to the articles.

"*Jarv.* (*Reading*). 'Fruit for my lady's monkey, 5*l.* per week.'

"*Sir P.* Five pounds for the monkey! Why 'tis a dessert for an alderman!

"*Lady T.* Why, Sir Peter, would you starve the poor animal? I dare swear he lives as reasonably as other monkeys do.

"*Sir P.* Well, well, go on.

"*Jarv.* 'China for ditto.'—

"*Sir P.* What, does he eat out of china?

"*Lady T.* Repairing china that he breaks—and I am sure no monkey breaks less.

"*Jarv.* 'Paid Mr. Warren for perfumes—milk of roses, 30*l.*'

"*Lady T.* Very reasonable.

"*Sir P.* 'Sdeath, madam, if you had been born to these expenses, I should not have been so much amazed; but I took you, madam, an honest country squire's daughter—

"*Lady T.* Oh, filthy; don't name it. Well, heaven forgive my mother, but I do believe my father must have been a man of quality.

"*Sir P.* Yes, madam, when first I saw you, you were drest in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys by your side; your occupations, madam, to superintend the poultry; your accomplishments, a complete knowledge of the family receipt-book—then you sat in a room hung round with fruit in worsted of your own working; your amusements were to play country-dances on an old spinet to your father while he went asleep after a fox-chase—to read Tillotson's sermons to your aunt Deborah. These, madam, were your recreations, and these the accomplishments that captivated me. Now, forsooth, you must have two footmen to your chair, and a pair of white dogs in a phaeton; you forget

(inconsistently, in some degree, with my notion of its being the two act Comedy announced in 1775) he had an idea of extending the plot through five acts.

"Act 1st, Scene 1st, Sir Peter and Steward—2d, Sir P. and Lady—then Young Pliable.

"Act 2d, Sir P. and Lady—Young Harrier—Sir P. and Sir Rowland, and Old Jeremy—Sir R. and daughter—Y. P. and Y. H.

"Act 3d, Sir R., Sir P. and O. J.—2d, Y. P. and Company, Y. R. O. R.—3d, Y. H. and Maria—Y. H., O. R. and Young Harrier, to borrow.

"Act 4th, Y. P. and Maria, to borrow his money; gets away what he had received from his uncle.—Y. P. Old Jer. and tradesmen.—P. and Lady T." etc. etc.

when you used to ride double behind the butler on a docked bay coach-horse. . . . . Now you must have a French hair-dresser; do you think you did not look as well when you had your hair combed smooth over a roller? . . . . . Then you could be content to sit with me, or walk by the side of the Ha! Ha!

"*Lady T.* True, I did; and when you asked me if I could love an old fellow, who would deny me nothing, I simpered and said 'Till death.'

"*Sir P.* Why did you say so?

"*Lady T.* Shall I tell you the truth?

"*Sir P.* If it is not too great a favour.

"*Lady T.* Why, then, the truth is I was heartily tired of all these agreeable recreations you have so well remembered, and having a spirit to spend and enjoy fortune, I was determined to marry the first fool I should meet with. . . . . You made me a wife, for which I am much obliged to you, and, if you have a wish to make me more grateful still, make me a widow[1]." * * * * *

"*Sir P.* Then, you never had a desire to please me, or add to my happiness?

"*Lady T.* Sincerely, I never thought about you; did you imagine that age was catching? I think you have been overpaid for all you could bestow on me. Here am I surrounded by half a hundred lovers, not one of whom but would buy a single smile by a thousand such baubles as you grudge me.

"*Sir P.* Then you wish me dead?

"*Lady T.* You know I do not, for you have made no settlement on me.

* * * * *

"*Sir P.* I am but middle-aged.

"*Lady T.* There's the misfortune; put yourself on, or back, twenty years, and either way I should like you the better.

* * * * *

Yes, sir, and then your behaviour too was different; you would dress, and smile, and bow; fly to fetch me any thing I wanted; praise every thing I did or said; fatigue your stiff face with an eternal grin; nay, you even committed poetry, and muffled your harsh tones into a lover's whisper to sing it yourself, so that even my mother said you were the smartest old bachelor she ever saw—a billet-doux engrossed on buckram[2]!!!!!!

* * * * *

Let girls take my advice, and never marry an old bachelor. He must be so either because he could find nothing to love in women, or because women could find nothing to love in him."

The greater part of this dialogue is evidently *experimental,* and the play of repartee protracted with no other view, than to take the chance of a trump of wit or humour turning up.

[1] The speeches which I have omitted consist merely of repetitions of the same thoughts with but very little variation of the language.

[2] These notes of admiration are in the original, and seem meant to express the surprise of the author at the extravagance of his own joke.

In comparing the two characters in this sketch with what they are at present, it is impossible not to be struck by the signal change that they have undergone. The transformation of Sir Peter into a gentleman has refined, without weakening, the ridicule of his situation; and there is an interest created by the respectability, and amiableness of his sentiments, which, contrary to the effect produced in general by elderly gentlemen so circumstanced, makes us rejoice, at the end, that he has his young wife all to himself. The improvement in the character of Lady Teazle is still more marked and successful. Instead of an ill-bred young shrew, whose readiness to do wrong leaves the mind in but little uncertainty as to her fate, we have a lively and innocent, though imprudent country girl, transplanted into the midst of all that can bewilder and endanger her, but with still enough of the purity of rural life about her heart, to keep the blight of the world from settling upon it permanently.

There is, indeed, in the original draught a degree of glare and coarseness, which proves the eye of the artist to have been fresh from the study of Wycherley and Vanbrugh; and this want of delicacy is particularly observable in the subsequent scene between Lady Teazle and Surface—the chastening down of which to its present tone is not the least of those triumphs of taste and skill, which every step in the eloboration of this fine Comedy exhibits.

"*Scene*[4]—YOUNG PLIANT'S *Room.*

"*Young P.* I wonder her ladyship is not here: she promised me to call this morning. I have a hard game to play here, to pursue my designs on Maria. I have brought myself into a scrape with the mother-in-law. However, I think we have taken care to ruin my brother's character with my uncle, should he come to-morrow. Frank has not an ill quality in his nature; yet, a neglect of forms, and of the opinion of the world, has hurt him in the estimation of all his graver friends. I have profited by his errors, and contrived to gain a character, which now serves me as a mask to lie under.

"*Enter* LADY TEAZLE.

"*Lady T.* What, musing, or thinking of me?

"*Young P.* I was thinking unkindly of you; do you know now that you must repay me for this delay, or I must be coaxed into good humour?

"*Lady T.* Nay, in faith you should pity me—this old curmudgeon of late is grown so jealous, that I dare scarce go out, till I know he is secure for some time.

"*Young P.* I am afraid the insinuations we have had spread about Frank have operated too strongly on him—we meant only to direct his suspicions to a wrong object.

[4] The Third of the fourth Act in the present form of the Comedy. This scene underwent many changes afterwards, and was oftener put back into the crucible than any other part of the play.

"*Lady T.* Oh, hang him! I have told him plainly that if he continues to be so suspicious, I'll leave him entirely, and make him allow me a separate maintenance.

"*Young P.* But, my charmer, if ever that should be the case, you see before you the man who will ever be attached to you.—But you must not let matters come to extremities; you can never be revenged so well by leaving him, as by living with him, and let my sincere affection make amends for his brutality.

"*Lady T.* But how shall I be sure now that you are sincere? I have sometimes suspected, that you loved my niece[1].

"*Young P.* Oh, hang her, a puling idiot, without sense or spirit.

"*Lady T.* But what proofs have I of your love to me, for I have still so much of my country prejudices left, that if I were to do a foolish thing (and I think I can't promise), it shall be for a man who would risk every thing for me alone. How shall I be sure you love me?

"*Young P.* I have dreamed of you every night this week past.

"*Lady T.* That's a sign you have slept every night for this week past; for my part, I would not give a pin for a lover who could not wake for a month in absence.

"*Young P.* I have written verses on you out of number.

"*Lady T.* I never saw any.

"*Young P.* No—they did not please me, and so I tore them.

"*Lady T.* Then it seems you wrote them only to divert yourself.

"*Young P.* Am I doomed for ever to suspense?

"*Lady T.* I don't know—if I was convinced——

"*Young P.* Then let me on my knees——

"*Lady T.* Nay, nay, I will have no raptures either. This much I can tell you, that if I am to be seduced to do wrong, I am not to be taken by storm, but by deliberate capitulation, and that only where my reason or my heart is convinced.

"*Young P.* Then, to say it at once—the world gives itself liberties—

"*Lady T.* Nay, I am sure without cause; for I am as yet unconscious of any ill, though I know not what I may be forced to.

"*Young P.* The fact is, my dear Lady Teazle, that your extreme innocence is the very cause of your danger; it is the integrity of your heart that makes you run into a thousand imprudences, which a full consciousness of error would make you guard against. Now, in that case, you can't conceive how much more circumspect you would be.

"*Lady T.* Do you think so?

"*Young P.* Most certainly. Your character is like a person in a plethora, absolutely dying of too much health.

"*Lady T.* So then you would have me sin in my own defence, and part with my virtue to preserve my reputation[2].

"*Young P.* Exactly so, upon my credit, ma'am."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

[1] He had not yet decided whether to make Maria the daughter-in-law or niece of Lady Teazle.

[2] This sentence seems to have haunted him—I find it written in every direction, and without any material change in its form, over the pages of his different memorandum-books.

It will be observed, from all I have cited, that much of the original material is still preserved throughout; but that, like the ivory melting in the hands of Pygmalion, it has lost all its first rigidity and roughness, and, assuming at every touch some variety of aspect, seems to have gained new grace by every change.

> *" Mollescit eburq positoque rigore*
> *Subsidit digitis, ceditque ut Hymettia sole*
> *Cera remollescit, tractataque pollice multas*
> *Flectitur in facies, ipsoque fit utilis usu."*
>
> Where'er his fingers move, his eye can trace
> The once rude ivory softening into grace—
> Pliant as wax that, on Hymettus' hill,
> Melts in the sunbeam, it obeys his skill;
> At every touch some different aspect shows,
> And still, the oftener touch'd, the lovelier grows.

I need not, I think, apologise for the length of the extracts I have given, as they cannot be otherwise than interesting to all lovers of literary history. To trace even the mechanism of an author's style through the erasures and alterations of his rough copy, is, in itself, no ordinary gratification of curiosity; and the *brouillon* of Rousseau's Héloïse, in the library of the Chamber of Deputies at Paris, affords a study in which more than the mere "auceps syllabarum" might delight. But it is still more interesting to follow thus the course of a writer's thoughts—to watch the kindling of new fancies as he goes—to accompany him in his change of plans, and see the various vistas that open upon him at every step. It is, indeed, like being admitted by some magical power, to witness the mysterious processes of the natural world—to see the crystal forming by degrees round its primitive nucleus, or observe the slow ripening of

> "the imperfect ore,
> " And know it will be gold another day! "

In respect of mere style, too, the workmanship of so pure a writer of English as Sheridan is well worth the attention of all who would learn the difficult art of combining ease with polish, and being, at the same time, idiomatic and elegant. There is not a page of these manuscripts that does not bear testimony to the fastidious care with which he selected, arranged, and moulded his language, so as to form it into that transparent channel of his thoughts, which it is at present.

His chief objects in correcting were to condense and simplify—to get rid of all unnecessary phrases and epithets, and, in short, to strip away from the thyrsus of his wit every leaf that could render it less light and portable. One instance out of many will show the

improving effect of these operations [1]. The following is the original form of a speech of Sir Peter's :—

"People, who utter a tale of scandal, knowing it to be forged, deserve the pillory more than for a forged bank-note. They can't pass the lie without putting their names on the back of it. You say no person has a right to come on you because you didn't invent it; but you should know that, if the drawer of the lie is out of the way, the injured party has a right to come on any of the indorsers."

When this is compared with the form in which the same thought is put at present, it will be perceived how much the wit has gained in lightness and effect by the change :—

"*Mrs. Candour.* But sure you would not be quite so severe on those who only report what they hear?

"*Sir P.* Yes, madam, I would have Law-merchant for them too, and in all cases of slander currency [2], whenever the drawer of the lie was not to be found, the injured party should have a right to come on any of the indorsers."

Another great source of the felicities of his style, and to which he attended most anxiously in revision, was the choice of epithets; in which he has the happy art of making these accessary words not only minister to the clearness of his meaning, but bring out new effects in his wit by the collateral lights which they strike upon it—and even where the principal idea has but little significance, he contrives to enliven it into point by the quaintness or contrast of his epithets.

Among the many rejected scraps of dialogue that lie about, like the chippings of a Phidias, in this work-shop of wit, there are some precious enough to be preserved, at least, as relics. For instance,—"She is one of those, who convey a libel in a frown, and wink a reputation down." The following touch of costume, too, in Sir Peter's description of the rustic dress of Lady Teazle before he married her :—"You forget when a little wire and gauze, with a few beads, made you a fly-cap not much bigger than a blue-bottle."

The specimen which Sir Benjamin Backbite gives of his poetical talents was taken, it will be seen, from the following verses, which

[1] In one or two sentences he has left a degree of stiffness in the style, not so much from inadvertence, as from the sacrifice of ease to point. Thus, in the following example, he has been tempted by an antithesis into an inversion of phrase by no means idiomatic. "The plain state of the matter is this—I am an extravagant young fellow *who want money to borrow;* you I take to be a prudent old fellow, who have got money to lend."

In the Collection of his Works this phrase is given differently—but without authority from any of the manuscript copies.

[2] There is another simile among his memorandums of the same mercantile kind :—"A sort of broker in scandal, who transfers lies without fees."

I find in Mr. Sheridan's hand-writing—one of those trifles, perhaps, with which he and is friend Tickell were in the constant habit of amusing themselves, and written apparently with the intention of ridiculing some woman of fashion.

"Then, behind, all my hair is done up in a plat,
And so, like a cornet's, tuck'd under my hat.
Then I mount on my palfrey as gay as a lark,
And, follow'd by John, take the dust [1] in High Park.
In the way I am met by some smart macaroni,
Who rides by my side on a little bay pony—
No sturdy Hibernian, with shoulders so wide,
But as taper and slim as the ponies they ride;
Their legs are as slim, and their shoulders no wider,
Dear sweet little creatures, both pony and rider!

But sometimes, when hotter, I order my chaise,
And manage, myself, my two little greys.
Sure never were seen two such sweet little ponies,
Other horses are clowns, and these macaronies,
And to give them this title, I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim, and their tails are so long.

In Kensington Gardens to stroll up and down,
You know was the fashion before you left town,—
The thing's well enough, when allowance is made
For the size of the trees and the depth of the shade,
But the spread of their leaves such a shelter affords
To those noisy, impertinent creatures called birds,
Whose ridiculous chirruping ruins the scene,
Brings the country before me, and gives me the spleen.

Yet, tho' 'tis too rural—to come near the mark,
We all herd in *one* walk, and that, nearest the Park,
There with ease we may see, as we pass by the wicket,
The chimneys of Knightsbridge and—footmen at cricket.
I must tho', in justice, declare that the grass,
Which, worn by our feet, is diminished apace,
In a little time more will be brown and as flat
As the sand at Vauxhall or as Ranelagh mat.
Improving thus fast, perhaps, by degrees,
We may see rolls and butter spread under the trees,
With a small pretty band in each seat of the walk,
To play little tunes and enliven our talk."

Though Mr. Sheridan appears to have made more easy progress, after he had incorporated his two first plots into one, yet, even in the details of the new plan, considerable alterations were subsequently made—whole scenes suppressed or transposed, and the dialogue of some entirely re-written. In the third Act, for instance, as it originally stood, there was a long scene, in which Rowley,

[1] This phrase is made use of in the dialogue:—"As Lady Betty Curricle was taking the dust in Hyde Park."

by a minute examination of Snake, drew from him, in the presence of Sir Oliver and Sir Peter, a full confession of his designs against the reputation of Lady Teazle. Nothing could be more ill-placed and heavy; it was accordingly cancelled, and the confession of Snake postponed to its natural situation, the conclusion. The scene, too, where Sir Oliver, as Old Stanley, comes to ask pecuniary aid of Joseph, was at first wholly different from what it is at present; and in some parts approached much nearer to the confines of caricature than the watchful taste of Mr. Sheridan would permit. For example, Joseph is represented in it as giving the old suitor only half-a-guinea, which the latter indignantly returns, and leaves him; upon which Joseph, looking at the half-guinea, exclaims, "Well, let him starve—this will do for the opera."

It was the fate of Mr. Sheridan, through life,—and, in a great degree, perhaps his policy,—to gain credit for excessive indolence and carlessness, while few persons, with so much natural brilliancy of talents, ever employed more art and circumspection in their display. This was the case, remarkably, in the instance before us. Notwithstanding the labour which he bestowed upon this comedy, (or we should rather, perhaps, say in consequence of that labour,) the first representation of the piece was announced before the whole of the copy was in the hands of the actors. The manuscript, indeed, of the five last scenes bears evident marks of this haste in finishing,—there being but one rough draught of them, scribbled upon detached pieces of paper; while, of all the preceding acts, there are numerous scripts, scattered promiscuously through six or seven books, with new interlineations and memorandums to each. On the last leaf of all, which exists just as we may suppose it to have been despatched by him to the copyist, there is the following curious specimen of doxology, written hastily, in the hand-writing of the respective parties, at the bottom:—

"Finished at last, Thank God!

"R. B. Sheridan."

"Amen!

"W. Hopkins"[1].

The cast of the play, on the first night of representation (May 8, 1777), was as follows:—

Sir Peter Teazle. . .	*Mr. King.*
Sir Oliver Surface. . .	*Mr. Yates.*
Joseph Surface. . .	*Mr. Palmer.*
Charles.	*Mr. Smith.*
Crabtree.	*Mr. Parsons.*

[1] The Prompter.

Sir Benjamin Backbite. . .	*Mr. Dodd.*
Rowley.	*Mr. Aickin.*
Moses.	*Mr. Baddeley.*
Trip.	*Mr. Lamash.*
Snake.	*Mr. Packer.*
Careless.	*Mr. Farren.*
Sir Harry Bumper. . . .	*Mr. Gawdry.*
Lady Teazle.	*Mrs. Abington.*
Maria	*Miss P. Hopkins.*
Lady Sneerwell.	*Miss Sherry.*
Mrs. Candour.	*Miss Pope.*

The success of such a play, so acted, could not be doubtful. Long after its first uninterrupted run, it continued to be played regularly two or three times a-week; and a comparison of the receipts of the first twelve nights, with those of a later period, will show how little the attraction of the piece had abated by repetition :—

May 8th, 1777.	*L.*	*s.*	*d.*	
School for Scandal	225	9	0	
Ditto	195	6	0	
Ditto A. B. (Author's night)	73	10	0	(Expenses)
Ditto	257	4	6	
Ditto	243	0	0	
Ditto A. B.	73	10	0	
Committee.	65	6	6	
School for Scandal. . . .	262	19	6	
Ditto	263	13	6	
Ditto A. B.	73	10	0	
Ditto K. (the King). . . .	272	9	6	
Ditto.	247	15	0	
Ditto.	255	14	0	

The following extracts are taken at hazard from an account of the weekly receipts of the Theatre, for the year 1778, kept with exemplary neatness and care by Mrs. Sheridan herself[1] :—

January, 1778.		*L.*	*s.*	*d.*
3d. Twelfth Night. . .	Queen Mab. . .	139	14	6
5th. Macbeth.	Queen Mab. . .	212	19	0
6th. Tempest.	Queen Mab. . .	107	15	6
7th. School for Scandal. .	Comus. . . .	292	16	0
8th. School for Fathers. .	Queen Mab. . .	181	10	6
9th. School for Scandal. .	Padlock. . . .	281	6	0
March				
14th. School for Scandal. .	Deserter. . . .	263	18	6
16th. Venice Preserved. .	Belphegor (New).	195	3	6
17th. Hamlet	Belphegor. . .	160	19	0
19th. School for Scandal. .	Belphegor. . .	261	10	0

[1] It appears from a letter of Holcroft to Mrs. Sheridan, (given in his Memoirs,

Such, indeed, was the predominant attraction of this comedy during the two years subsequent to its first appearance, that, in the official account of receipts for 1779, we find the following remark subjoined by the Treasurer :—"School for Scandal damped the new pieces." I have traced it by the same unequivocal marks of success through the years 1780 and 1781, and find the nights of its representation always rivalling those on which the King went to the theatre, in the magnitude of their receipts.

The following note from Garrick [1] to the author, dated May 12 (four days after the first appearance of the comedy), will be read with interest by all those for whom the great names of the drama have any charm :—

"Mr. Garrick's best wishes and compliments to Mr. Sheridan.

"How is the Saint to-day? A gentleman who is as mad as myself about y^e^ School remark'd, that the characters upon the stage at y^e^ falling of the screen stand too long before they speak;—I thought so too y^e^ first night :—he said it was the same on y^e^ 2nd, and was remark'd by others; —tho' they should be astonish'd, and a little petrify'd, yet it may be carry'd to too great a length.—All praise at Lord Lucan's last night."

The beauties of this comedy are so universally known and felt, that criticism may be spared the trouble of dwelling upon them very minutely. With but little interest in the plot, with no very profound or ingenious development of character, and with a group of personages, not one of whom has any legitimate claims upon either our affection or esteem, it yet, by the admirable skill with which its materials are managed,—the happy contrivance of the situations, at once both natural and striking,—the fine feeling of the ridiculous that smiles throughout, and that perpetual play of wit which never tires, but seems, like running water, to be kept fresh by its own flow,—by all this general animation and effect, combined with a finish of the details, almost faultless, it unites the suffrages, at once, of the refined and the simple, and is not less successful in ministering to the natural enjoyment of the latter, than in satisfying and delighting the most fastidious tastes among the former. And this is the true triumph of genius in all the arts,—whether in

vol. i. p. 275.) that she was also in the habit of reading for Sheridan the new pieces sent in by dramatic candidates:—"Mrs. Crewe (he says) has spoken to Mr. Sheridan concerning it (the Shepherdess of the Alps) as he informed me last night, desiring me at the same time to send it to you, who, he said, would not only read it yourself, but remind him of it."

[1] Murphy tells us, that Mr. Garrick attended the rehearsals, and "was never known on any former occasion to be more anxious for a favourite piece. He was proud of the new manager; and in a triumphant manner boasted of the genius to whom he had consigned the conduct of the theatre."—*Life of Garrick.*

painting, sculpture, music, or literature, those works which have pleased the greatest number of people of all classes, for the longest space of time, may without hesitation be pronounced the best; and, however mediocrity may enshrine itself in the admiration of the select few, the palm of excellence can only be awarded by the many.

The defects of The School for Scandal, if they can be allowed to amount to defects, are, in a great measure, traceable to that amalgamation of two distinct plots, out of which, as I have already shown, the piece was formed. From this cause,—like an accumulation of wealth from the union of two rich families,—has devolved that excessive opulence of wit, with which, as some critics think, the dialogue is overloaded; and which, Mr. Sheridan himself used often to mention, as a fault of which he was conscious in his work. That he had no such scruple, however, in writing it, appears evident from the pains which he took to string upon his new plot every bright thought and fancy which he had brought together for the two others; and it is not a little curious, in turning over his manuscript, to see how the outstanding jokes are kept in recollection upon the margin, till he can find some opportunity of funding them to advantage in the text. The consequence of all this is, that the dialogue, from beginning to end, is a continued sparkling of polish and point: and the whole of the Dramatis Personæ might be comprised under one common designation of Wits. Even Trip, the servant, is as pointed and shining as the rest, and has his master's wit, as he has his birth-day clothes, "with the gloss on[1]." The only personage among them that shows any "temperance in jesting," is old Rowley; and he, too, in the original, had his share in the general largess of *bons mots*,—one of the liveliest in the piece[2] being at first given to him, though afterwards transferred, with somewhat more fitness, to Sir Oliver. In short, the entire Comedy is a sort of El-Dorado of wit, where the precious metal is thrown about by all classes, as carelessly as if they had not the least idea of its value.

Another blemish that hypercriticism has noticed, and which may likewise be traced to the original conformation of the play, is the uselessness of some of the characters to the action or business of it —almost the whole of the "Scandalous College" being but, as it were, excrescences, through which none of the life-blood of the plot circulates. The cause of this is evident:—Sir Benjamin Backbite,

[1] This is one of the phrases that seem to have perplexed the taste of Sheridan, and upon so minute a point, as, whether it should be "with the gloss on," or, "with the gloss on them." After various trials of it in both ways, he decided, as might be expected from his love of idiom, for the former.

[2] The answer to the remark, that "charity begins at home,"—"and his, I presume, is of that domestic sort which never stirs abroad at all."

in the first plot to which he belonged, was a principal personage; but, being transplanted from thence into one with which he has no connection, not only he, but his uncle Crabtree, and Mrs. Candour, though contributing abundantly to the animation of the dialogue, have hardly any thing to do with the advancement of the story; and, like the accessories in a Greek drama, are but as a sort of Chorus of Scandal throughout. That this defect, or rather peculiarity, should have been observed at first, when criticism was freshly on the watch for food, is easily conceivable; and I have been told by a friend, who was in the pit on the first night of performance, that a person, who sat near him, said impatiently, during the famous scene at Lady Sneerwell's, in the Second Act,—"I wish these people would have done talking, and let the play begin."

It has often been remarked as singular, that the lovers, Charles and Maria, should never be brought in presence of each other till the last scene; and Mr. Sheridan used to say, that he was aware, in writing the Comedy, of the apparent want of dramatic management which such an omission would betray; but that neither of the actors, for whom he had destined those characters, was such as he could safely trust with a love-scene. There might, perhaps, too, have been, in addition to this motive, a little consciousness, on his own part, of not being exactly in his element in that tender style of writing, which such a scene, to make it worthy of the rest, would have required; and of which the specimens left us in the serious parts of The Rivals are certainly not among his most felicitous efforts.

By some critics the incident of the screen has been censured, as a contrivance unworthy of the dignity of comedy.[1] But in real life, of which comedy must condescend to be the copy, events of far greater importance are brought about by accidents as trivial; and in a world like ours, where the falling of an apple has led to the discovery of the laws of gravitation, it is surely too fastidious to deny to the dramatist the discovery of an intrigue by the falling of a screen. There is another objection as to the manner of employing this machine, which, though less grave, is perhaps less easily answered. Joseph, at the commencement of the scene, desires his servant to draw the screen before the window, because "his opposite neighbour is a maiden lady of so anxious a temper;" yet, afterwards, by placing Lady Teazle between the screen and the window,

[1] "In the old comedy, the catastrophe is occasioned, in general, by a change in the mind of some principal character, artfully prepared and cautiously conducted;—in the modern, the unfolding of the plot is effected by the overturning of a screen, the opening of a door, or some other equally dignified machine."—GIFFORD, *Essay on the Writings of Massinger.*

he enables this inquisitive lady to indulge her curiosity at leisure. It might be said, indeed, that Joseph, with the alternative of exposure to either the husband or neighbour, chooses the lesser evil; —but the oversight hardly requires a defence.

From the trifling nature of these objections to the dramatic merits of the School for Scandal, it will be seen that, like the criticism of Momus on the creaking of Venus's shoes, they only show how perfect must be the work in which no greater faults can be found. But a more serious charge has been brought against it on the score of morality, and the gay charm thrown around the irregularities of Charles is pronounced to be dangerous to the interest of honesty and virtue. There is no doubt that in this character only the fairer side of libertinism is presented,—that the merits of being in debt are rather too fondly insisted upon, and with a grace and spirit that might seduce even creditors into admiration. It was, indeed, playfully said, that no tradesman who applauded Charles could possibly have the face to dun the author afterwards. In looking, however, to the race of rakes that had previously held possession of the stage, we cannot help considering our release from the contagion of so much coarseness and selfishness to be worth even the increased risk of seduction that may have succeeded to it; and the remark of Burke, however questionable in strict ethics, is, at least, true on the stage, —that "vice loses half its evil by losing all its grossness."

It should be recollected, too, that, in other respects, the author applies the lash of moral satire very successfully. That group of slanderers who, like the Chorus of the Eumenides, go searching about for their prey with "eyes that drop poison," represent a class of persons in society who richly deserve such ridicule, and who—like their prototypes in Æschylus trembling before the shafts of Apollo—are here made to feel the full force of the archery of wit. It is indeed a proof of the effect and use of such satire, that the name of "Mrs. Candour" has become one of those formidable bye-words, which have more power in putting folly and ill-nature out of countenance, than whole volumes of the wisest remonstrance and reasoning.

The poetical justice exercised upon the Tartuffe of sentiment, Joseph, is another service to the cause of morals, which should more than atone for any dangerous embellishment of wrong that the portraiture of the younger brother may exhibit. Indeed, though both these characters are such as the moralist must visit with his censure, there can be little doubt to which we should, in real life, give the preference;—the levities and errors of the one, arising from warmth of heart and of youth, may be merely like those mists that exhale from summer streams, obscuring them awhile to the

eye, without affecting the native purity of their waters; while the hypocrisy of the other is like the *mirage* of the desert, shining with promise on the surface, but all false and barren beneath.

In a late work, professing to be the Memoirs of Mr. Sheridan, there are some wise doubts expressed as to his being really the author of the School for Scandal, to which, except for the purpose of exposing absurdity, I should not have thought it worth while to allude. It is an old trick of Detraction,—and one, of which it never tires,—to father the works of eminent writers upon others; or, at least, while it kindly leaves an author the credit of his worst performances, to find some one in the back-ground to ease him of the fame of his best. When this sort of charge is brought against a contemporary, the motive is intelligible; but, such an abstract pleasure have some persons in merely unsettling the crowns of Fame, that a worthy German has written an elaborate book to prove, that the Iliad was written, not by that particular Homer the world supposes, but by some *other* Homer! Indeed, if mankind were to be influenced by those *Qui tam* critics, who have, from time to time, in the course of the history of literature, exhibited informations of plagiarism against great authors, the property of fame would pass from its present holders into the hands of persons with whom the world is but little acquainted. Aristotle must refund to one Ocellus Lucanus—Virgil must make a *cessio bonorum* in favour of Pisander—the Metamorphoses of Ovid must be credited to the account of Parthenius of Nicæa, and (to come to a modern instance) Mr. Sheridan must, according to his biographer, Dr. Watkins, surrender the glory of having written the School for Scandal to a certain anonymous young lady, who died of a consumption in Thames Street!

To pass, however, to less hardy assailants of the originality of this comedy,—it is said that the characters of Joseph and Charles were suggested by those of Blifil and Tom Jones; that the accident of the arrival of Sir Oliver from India is copied from that of the return of Warner in Sidney Biddulph; and that the hint of the famous scandal scene at Lady Sneerwell's is borrowed from a comedy of Molière.

Mr. Sheridan, it is true, like all men of genius, had, in addition to the resources of his own wit, a quick apprehension of what suited his purpose in the wit of others, and a power of enriching whatever he adopted from them with such new grace, as gave him a sort of claim of paternity over it, and made it all his own. "C'est mon bien," said Molière, when accused of borrowing, "et je le reprends partout où je le trouve;" and next, indeed, to creation, the reproduction, in a new and more perfect form, of materials already existing, or the full development of thoughts that had but half blown in the hands of others, are the noblest miracles for which we

look to the hand of genius. It is not my intention therefore to defend Mr. Sheridan from this kind of plagiarism, of which he was guilty in common with the rest of his fellow-descendants from Prometheus, who all steal the spark wherever they can find it. But the instances, just alleged, of his obligations to others, are too questionable and trivial to be taken into any serious account. Contrasts of character, such as Charles and Joseph exhibit, are as common as the lights and shadows of a landscape, and belong neither to Fielding or Sheridan, but to nature. It is in the manner of transferring them to the canvas that the whole difference between the master and the copyist lies; and Charles and Joseph would, no doubt, have been what they are, if Tom Jones had never existed. With respect to the hint supposed to be taken from the novel of his mother, he at least had a right to consider any aid from that quarter as "son bien"—talent being the only patrimony to which he had succeeded. But the use made of the return of a relation in the play is wholly different from that to which the same incident is applied in the novel. Besides, in those golden times of Indian delinquency, the arrival of a wealthy relative from the East was no very unobvious ingredient in a story.

The imitation of Molière (if, as I take for granted, the Misanthrope be the play, in which the origin of the famous scandal scene is said to be found) is equally faint and remote, and, except in the common point of scandal, untraceable. Nothing, indeed, can be more unlike than the manner in which the two scenes are managed. Célimène, in Moljère, bears the whole *frais* of the conversation; and this female La Bruyère's tedious and solitary dissections of character would be as little borne on the English stage, as the quick and dazzling movement of so many lancets of wit as operate in the School for Scandal would be tolerated on that of the French.

It is frequently said that Mr. Sheridan was a good deal indebted to Wycherley; and he himself gave, in some degree, a colour to the charge, by the suspicious impatience which he betrayed whenever any allusion was made to it. He went so far, indeed, it is said, as to deny having ever read a line of Wycherley (though of Vanbrugh's dialogue he always spoke with the warmest admiration);—and this assertion, as well as some others equally remarkable, such as, that he never saw Garrick on the stage, that he never had seen a play throughout in his life, however strange and startling they may appear, are, at least, too curious and characteristic not to be put upon record. His acquaintance with Wycherley was possibly but at second-hand, and confined, perhaps, to Garrick's alteration of the Country Wife, in which the incident, already mentioned as having been borrowed for the Duenna, is preserved.

There is, however, a scene in the Plain Dealer (Act. II.), where Nevil and Olivia attack the characters of the persons with whom Nevil had dined, of which it is difficult to believe that Mr. Sheridan was ignorant; as it seems to contain much of that *Hyle*, or First Matter, out of which his own more perfect creations were formed.

In Congreve's Double Dealer, too, (Act. III. Scene 10.) there is much which may, at least, have mixed itself with the recollections of Sheridan, and influenced the course of his fancy—it being often found that the images with which the memory is furnished, like those pictures hung up before the eyes of pregnant women at Sparta, produce insensibly a likeness to themselves in the offspring which the imagination brings forth. The admirable drollery in Congreve about Lady Froth's verses on her coachman—

> "For as the sun shines every day,
> So of our Coachman I may say"—

is by no means unlikely to have suggested the doggerel of Sir Benjamin Backbite; and the scandalous conversation in this scene, though far inferior in delicacy and ingenuity to that of Sheridan, has somewhat, as the reader will see, of a parental resemblance to it :—

"*Lord Froth.* Hee, hee, my dear; have you done? Won't you join with us? We were laughing at my Lady Whifler and Mr. Sneer.

"*Lady F.* Ay, my dear, were you? Oh filthy Mr. Sneer! he is a nauseous figure, a most fulsamick fop. He spent two days together in going about Covent-Garden to suit the lining of his coach with his complexion.

"*Ld. F.* Oh, silly! yet his aunt is as fond of him, as if she had brought the ape into the world herself.

"*Brisk.* Who? my lady Toothless? Oh, she is a mortifying spectacle; she's always chewing the cud like an old ewe.

"*Ld. F.* Then she's always ready to laugh, when Sneer offers to speak; and sits in expectation of his no jests, with her gums bare, and her mouth open—

"*Brisk.* Like an oyster at low ebb, egad—ha, ha, ha!

"*Cynthia.* (*Aside.*) Well, I find there are no fools so inconsiderable themselves, but they can render other people contemptible by exposing their infirmities.

"*Lady. F.* Then that t'other great strapping Lady—I can't hit off her name; the old fat fool, that paints so exorbitantly.

"*Brisk.* I know whom you mean—but, deuce take her, I can't hit off her name either—paints, d'ye say? Why she lays it on with a trowel. Then she has a great beard that bristles through it, and makes her look as if she was plaistered with lime and hair, let me perish."

It would be a task not uninteresting, to enter into a detailed

comparison of the characteristics and merits of Mr. Sheridan, as a dramatic writer, with those of the other great masters of the art; and to consider how far they differed or agreed with each other, in the structure of their plots and management of their dialogue—in the mode of laying the train of their repartee, or pointing the artillery of their wit. But I have already devoted to this part of my subject a much ampler space, than to some of my readers will appear either necessary or agreeable;—though by others, more interested in such topics, my diffuseness will, I trust, be readily pardoned. In tracking Mr. Sheridan through his two distinct careers of literature and of politics, it is on the highest point of his elevation in each that the eye naturally rests; and the School for Scandal in one, and the Begum speeches in the other, are the two grand heights—the "*summa biverticis umbra Parnassi*"—from which he will stand out to after times, and round which, therefore, his biographer may be excused for lingering with most fondness and delay.

It appears singular that, during the life of Mr. Sheridan, no authorized or correct edition of this play should have been published in England. He had, at one time, disposed of the copyright to Mr. Ridgway of Piccadilly, but, after repeated applications from the latter for the manuscript, he was told by Mr. Sheridan, as an excuse for keeping it back, that he had been nineteen years endeavouring to satisfy himself with the style of the School for Scandal, but had not yet succeeded. Mr. Ridgway, upon this, ceased to give him any further trouble on the subject.

The edition printed in Dublin is, with the exception of a few unimportant omissions and verbal differences, perfectly correct. It appears that, after the success of the comedy in London, he presented a copy of it to his eldest sister, Mrs. Lefanu, to be disposed of, for her own advantage, to the manager of the Dublin Theatre. The sum of a hundred guineas, and free admissions for her family, were the terms upon which Ryder, the manager at that period, purchased from this lady the right of acting the play; and it was from the copy thus procured that the edition afterwards published in Dublin was printed. I have collated this edition with the copy given by Mr. Sheridan to Lady Crewe (the last, I believe, ever revised by himself) [1] and find it, with the few exceptions already mentioned, correct throughout.

[1] Among the corrections in this copy (which are in his own hand-writing, and but few in number), there is one which shows not only the retentiveness of his memory, but the minute attention which he paid to the structure of his sentences. Lady Teazle, in her scene with Sir Peter in the Second Act, says, "That's very true, indeed, Sir Peter; and after having married you, I should never pretend to

The School for Scandal has been translated into most of the languages of Europe, and, among the French particularly, has undergone a variety of metamorphoses. A translation, undertaken, it appears, with the permission of Sheridan himself, was published in London, in the year 1789, by a Mons^r. Bunell Delille, who, in a Dedication to "Milord Macdonald," gives the following account of the origin of his task: "Vous savez, Milord, de quelle manière mystérieuse cette pièce, qui n'a jamais été imprimée que furtivement, se trouva l'été dernier sur ma table, en manuscrit in-folio; et, si vous daignez vous le rappeler, après vous avoir fait part de l'aventure, je courus chez Monsieur Sheridan pour lui demander la permission," etc. etc.

The scenes of the Auction and the Screen were introduced, for the first time, I believe, on the French stage, in a little piece called "*Les Deux Neveux*," acted in the year 1788, by the young comedians of the Comte de Beaujolais. Since then, the story has been reproduced under various shapes and names: — "Les Portraits de Famille," "Valsain et Florville," and, at the Théâtre Français, under the title of the "Tartuffe de Mœurs." Lately, too, the taste for the subject has revived. The Vaudeville has founded upon it a successful piece, called "Les Deux Cousins;" and there is even a melodrame at the Porte St. Martin, entitled "L'École du Scandale."

CHAPTER VI.

Further Purchase of Theatrical property.—Monody to the Memory of Garrick.—Essay on metre.—The Critic.—Essay on Absentees.—Political Connections.—The "Englishman."—Elected for Stafford.

The document in Mr. Sheridan's hand-writing, already mentioned, from which I have stated the sums paid in 1776 by him, Dr. Ford, and Mr. Linley, for Garrick's moiety of the Drury-Lane Theatre, thus mentions the new purchase, by which he extended his interest in this property in the year 1778: — "Mr. Sheridan afterwards was obliged to buy Mr. Lacy's moiety at a price exceeding 45,000*l.*: this was in the year 1778." — He then adds — what it may be as well to cite, while I have the paper before me, though relating to subsequent changes in the property: — "In order to enable Mr. S. to complete this purpose, he afterwards

taste again, I allow." It was thus that the passage stood at first in Lady Crewe's copy,—as it does still, too, in the Dublin edition, and in that given in the Collection of his Works:—but in his final revision of this copy, the original reading of the sentence, such as I find it in all his earlier manuscript of the play, is restored:—"That's very true, indeed, Sir Peter: and, after having married you, I am sure I should never pretend to ta te again."

consented to divide his original share between Dr. Ford and Mr. Linley, so as to make up each of theirs a quarter. But the price at which they purchased from Mr. Sheridan was not at the rate which he bought from Lacy, though at an advance on the price paid to Garrick. Mr. S. has since purchased Dr. Ford's quarter for the sum of 17,000*l.*, subject to the increased incumbrance of the additional renters."

By what spell all these thousands were conjured up, it would be difficult accurately to ascertain. That happy art — in which the people of this country are such adepts — of putting the future in pawn for the supply of the present, must have been the chief resource of Mr. Sheridan in all these later purchases.

Among the visible signs of his increased influence in the affairs of the theatre, was the appointment, this year, of his father to be manager; — a reconciliation having taken place between them, which was facilitated, no doubt, by the brightening prospects of the son, and by the generous confidence which his prosperity gave him in making the first advances towards such a reunion.

One of the novelties of the year was a musical entertainment called The Camp, which was falsely attributed to Mr. Sheridan at the time, and has since been inconsiderately admitted into the Collection of his Works. This unworthy trifle (as appears from a rough copy of it in my possession) was the production of Tickell, and the patience with which his friend submitted to the imputation of having written it was a sort of "martyrdom of fame" which few but himself could afford.

At the beginning of the year 1779 Garrick died, and Sheridan, as chief mourner, followed him to the grave. He also wrote a Monody to his memory, which was delivered by Mrs. Yates, after the play of the West Indian, in the month of March following. During the interment of Garrick in Poets' Corner, Mr. Burke had remarked that the statue of Shakspeare seemed to point to the grave where the great actor of his works was laid. This hint did not fall idly on the ear of Sheridan, as the following *fixation* of the thought, in the verses which he afterwards wrote, proved: —

> "The throng that mourn'd, as their dead favourite pass'd,
> The grac'd respect that claim'd him to the last;
> While Shakspeare's image, from its hallow'd base,
> Seem'd to prescribe the grave and point the place."

This Monody, which was the longest flight ever sustained by its author in verse, is more remarkable, perhaps, for refinement and elegance, than for either novelty of thought or depth of sentiment. There is, however, a fine burst of poetical eloquence in

the lines beginning "Superior hopes the poet's bosom fire;" and this passage, accordingly, as being the best in the poem, was, by the gossiping critics of the day, attributed to Tickell,—from the same laudable motives that had induced them to attribute Tickell's bad farce to Sheridan. There is no end to the variety of these small missiles of malice, with which the Gullivers of the world of literature are assailed by the Lilliputians around them.

The chief thought which pervades this poem,—namely, the fleeting nature of the actor's art and fame,—had already been more simply expressed by Garrick himself in his Prologue to The Clandestine Marriage:—

> "The painter's dead, yet still he charms the eye,
> While England lives, his fame can never die;
> But he, who struts his hour upon the stage,
> Can scarce protract his fame through half an age;
> Nor pen nor pencil can the actor save;
> The art and artist have one common grave."

Colley Cibber, too, in his portrait (if I remember right) of Betterton, breaks off into the same reflection, in the following graceful passage, which is one of those instances, where prose could not be exchanged for poetry without loss:—"Pity it is that the momentary beauties, flowing from an harmonious elocution, cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record; that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them, or, at best, can but faintly glimmer through the memory of a few surviving spectators."

With respect to the style and versification of the Monody, the heroic couplet in which it is written has long been a sort of Ulysses' bow, at which Poetry tries her suitors, and at which they almost all fail. Redundancy of epithet and monotony of cadence are the inseparable companions of this metre in ordinary hands; nor could all the taste and skill of Sheridan keep it wholly free from these defects in his own. To the subject of metre, he had, nevertheless, paid great attention. There are among his papers some fragments of an Essay[1] which he had commenced on the nature of poetical

[1] Or rather memorandums collected, as was his custom, with a view to the composition of such an Essay. He had been reading the writings of Dr. Foster, Webb, etc. on this subject, with the intention, apparently, of publishing an answer to them. The following (which is one of the few consecutive passages I can find in these notes) will show how little reverence he entertained for that ancient prosody, upon which, in the system of English education, so large and precious a portion of human life is wasted:—"I never desire a stronger proof that an author is on a wrong scent on these subjects, than to see Quintilian, Aristotle, etc. quoted on a point where they have not the least business. All poetry is made by the ear, which must be the sole judge—it is a sort of musical rhythm-

accent and emphasis; and the adaptation of his verses to the airs in the Duenna—even allowing for the aid which he received from Mrs. Sheridan—shows a degree of musical feeling, from which a much greater variety of cadence might be expected, than we find throughout the versification of this poem. The taste of the time, however, was not prepared for any great variation in the music of the couplet. The regular foot-fall, established so long, had yet been but little disturbed; and the only licence of this kind hazarded through the poem—"All perishable"—was objected to by some of the author's critical friends, who suggested, that it would be better thus: "All doom'd to perish."

Whatever, in more important points, may be the inferiority of the present school of poetry to that which preceded it, in the music of versification there can be but little doubt of its improvement; nor has criticism, perhaps, ever rendered a greater service to the art, than in helping to unseal the ears of its worshippers to that true spheric harmony of the elders of song, which, during a long period of our literature, was as unheard as if it never existed.

us. If then we want to reduce our practical harmony to rules, every man, with a knowledge of his own language and a good ear, is at once competent to the undertaking. Let him trace it to music—if he has no knowledge, let him inquire.

"We have lost all notion of the ancient accent;—we have lost their pronunciation;—all puzzling about it is ridiculous, and trying to find out the melody of our own verse by theirs is still worse. We should have had all our own metres, if we never had heard a word of their language,—this I affirm. Every nation finds out for itself a national melody; and we may say of it, as of religion, no place has been discovered without music. A people, likewise, as their language improves, will introduce a music into their poetry, which is simply (that is to say, the numerical part of poetry, which must be distinguished from the imaginary) the transferring the time of melody into speaking. What then have the Greeks or Romans to do with our music? It is plain that our admiration of their verse is mere pedantry, because we could not adopt it. Sir Philip Sidney failed. If it had been melody we should have had it; our language is just as well calculated for it.

"It is astonishing that the excessive ridiculousness of a Gradus or Prosodial Dictionary has never struck our scholars. The idea of looking into a book to see whether the *sound* of a syllable be short or long, is absolutely as much a bull of Bœotian pedantry as ever disgraced Ireland." He then adds, with reference to some mistakes which Dr. Foster had appeared to him to have committed in his accentuation of English words:—"What strange effects has this system brought about! It has so corrupted the ear that absolutely our scholars cannot tell an English long syllable from a short one. If a boy were to make the *a* in "cano" or "amo" long, Dr. Foster would no doubt feel his ear hurt, and yet * * *."

Of the style in which some of his observations are committed to paper, the following is a curious specimen:—"Dr. Foster says that short syllables, when inflated with that emphasis which the sense demands, swell in height, length and breadth beyond their natural size.—The devil they do! Here is a most omnipotent power in emphasis. Quantity and accent may in vain toil to produce a little effect, but emphasis comes at once and monopolizes the power of them both."

The Monody does not seem to have kept the stage more than five or six nights :—nor is this surprising. The recitation of a long, serious address must always be, to a certain degree, ineffective on the stage; and though this subject contained within it many strong sources of interest, as well personal as dramatic, they were not, perhaps, turned to account by the poet with sufficient warmth and earnestness on his own part, to excite a very ready response of sympathy in others. Feeling never wanders into generalities—it is only by concentrating his rays upon one point that even Genius can kindle strong emotion; and, in order to produce any such effect in the present instance upon the audience, Garrick himself ought to have been kept prominently and individually before their eyes in almost every line. Instead of this, however, the man is soon forgotten in his Art, which is then deliberately compared with other Arts, and the attention, through the greater part of the poem, is diffused over the transitoriness of actors in general, instead of being brought strongly to a focus upon the particular loss just sustained. Even in those parts, which apply most directly to Garrick, the feeling is a good deal diluted by this tendency to the abstract; and, sometimes, by a false taste of personification, like that in the very first line,—

> "If dying *excellence* deserves a tear,"

where the substitution of a quality of the man for the man himself[1] puts the mind, as it were, one remove farther from the substantial object of its interest, and disturbs that sense of reality, on which the operations even of Fancy itself ought to be founded.

But it is very easy to play the critic—so easy as to be a task of but little glory. For one person who could produce such a poem as this, how many thousands exist and have existed, who could shine in the exposition of its faults? Though insufficient, perhaps, in itself, to create a reputation for an author, yet, as a "*stella Coronæ*,"—one of the stars in that various crown, which marks the place of Sheridan in the firmament of Fame,—it not only well sustains its own part in the lustre, but draws new light from the host of brilliancy around it.

It was in the course of this same year that he produced the entertainment of the Critic—his last legitimate offering on the shrine of the Dramatic Muse. In this admirable farce we have a

[1] Another instance of this fault occurs in his song "When sable night:"

> "As some fond mother, o'er her babe deploring,
> Wakes *its beauty* with a tear;"

where the clearness and reality of the picture are spoiled by the affectation of representing the *beauty* of the child as waked, instead of the child itself.

striking instance of that privilege which, as I have already said, Genius assumes, of taking up subjects that had passed through other hands, and giving them a new value and currency by his stamp. The plan of a Rehearsal was first adopted, for the purpose of ridiculing Dryden, by the Duke of Buckingham; but, though there is much laughable humour in some of the dialogue between Bayes and his friends, the salt of the satire altogether was not of a very conservative nature, and the piece continued to be served up to the public long after it had lost its relish. Fielding tried the same plan in a variety of pieces—in his Pasquin, his Historical Register, his Author's Farce, his Eurydice, etc.,—but without much success, except in the comedy of Pasquin, which had, I believe, at first a prosperous career, though it has since, except with the few that still read it for its fine tone of pleasantry, fallen into oblivion. It was reserved for Sheridan to give vitality to this form of dramatic humour, and to invest even his satirical portraits—as in the instance of Sir Fretful Plagiary, which, it is well known, was designed for Cumberland—with a generic character, which, without weakening the particular resemblance, makes them representatives for ever of the whole class to which the original belonged. Bayes, on the contrary, is a caricature—made up of little more than personal peculiarities, which may amuse as long as reference can be had to the prototype, but like those supplemental features furnished from the living subject by Taliacotius, fall lifeless the moment the individual that supplied them is defunct.

It is evident, however, that Bayes was not forgotten in the composition of The Critic. His speech, where the two Kings of Brentford are singing in the clouds, may be considered as the exemplar which Sheridan had before him in writing some of the rehearsal-scenes of Puff :—

"*Smith.* Well, but methinks the sense of this song is not very plain.

"*Bayes.* Plain! why did you ever hear any people in the clouds sing plain? They must be all for flight of fancy at its fullest range, without the least check or controul upon it. When once you tie up spirits and people in clouds to speak plain, you spoil all."

There are particular instances of imitation still more direct. Thus, in The Critic :—

"*Enter* Sir Walter Raleigh *and* Sir Christopher Hatton.

"*Sir Christ. H.* True, gallant Raleigh.—

"*Dangle.* What, they had been talking before?

"*Puff.* Oh yes, all the way as they came along.

In the same manner in The Rehearsal, where the Physician and Usher of the two Kings enter :—

"*Phys.* Sir, to conclude—

"*Smith.* What, before he begins?

"*Bayes.* No, Sir; you must know they had been talking of this a pretty while without.

"*Smith.* Where? in the tyring room?

"*Bayes.* Why, ay, Sir. He's so dull."

Bayes, at the opening of the Fifth Act, says, "Now, gentlemen, I will be bold to say, I'll show you the greatest scene that England ever saw; I mean not for words, for those I don't value, but for state, show, and magnificence." Puff announces his grand scene in much the same manner :—"Now then for my magnificence! my battle! my noise! and my procession!"

In Fielding, too, we find numerous hints or germs, that have come to their full growth of wit in the Critic. For instance, in Trapwit (a character in "Pasquin") there are the rudiments of Sir Fretful as well as of Puff :—

"*Sneerwell.* Yes, faith, I think I would cut that last speech.

"*Trapwit.* Sir, I'll sooner cut off an ear or two; Sir, that's the very best thing in the whole play. * * * * * * * *

Trapwit. Now, Mr. Sneerwell, we shall begin my third and last act; and I believe I may defy all the poets who have ever writ, or ever will write, to produce its equal: it is, Sir, so cramm'd with drums and trumpets, thunder and lightning, battles and ghosts, that I believe the audience will want no entertainment after it."

The manager, Marplay, in "The Author's Farce," like him of Drury-Lane in the Critic, "does the town the honour of writing himself;" and the following incident in "The Historical Register" suggested possibly the humorous scene of Lord Burleigh :—

"*Enter Four Patriots from different Doors, who meet in the centre and shake Hands.*

"*Sour-wit.* These patriots seem to equal your greatest politicians in their silence.

"*Medley.* Sir, what they think now cannot well be spoke; but you may conjecture a good deal from their shaking their heads."

Such coincidences, whether accidental or designed, are at least curious, and the following is another of somewhat a different kind :—"Steal! (says Sir Fretful) to be sure they may; and egad, serve your best thoughts as gipsies do stolen children, disfigure them, to make 'em pass for their own [1]." Churchill has the same idea in nearly the same language :—

[1] This simile was again made use of by him in a speech upon Mr. Pitt's India Bill, which he declared to be "nothing more than a bad plagiarism on Mr. Fox's, disfigured, indeed, as gipsies do stolen children, in order to make them pass for their own."

" Still pilfers wretched plans and makes them worse,
Like gipsies, lest the stolen brat be known,
Defacing first, then claiming for their own."

The character of Puff, as I have already shown, was our author's first dramatic attempt; and, having left it unfinished in the porch as he entered the Temple of Comedy, he now, we see, made it worthy of being his farewell oblation in quitting it. Like Eve's flowers, it was his

" Early visitation, and his last."

We must not, however, forget a lively Epilogue which he wrote this year, for Miss Hannah More's tragedy of Fatal Falsehood, in which there is a description of a blue-stocking lady, executed with all his happiest point. Of this dense, epigrammatic style, in which every line is a cartridge of wit in itself, Sheridan was, both in prose and verse, a consummate master; and if any one could hope to succeed, after Pope, in a Mock Epic, founded upon fashionable life, it would have been, we should think, the writer of this epilogue. There are some verses, written on the "*Immortelle Emilie*" of Voltaire, in which her employments, as a *savante* and a woman of the world, are thus contrasted: —

" *Tout lui plaît, tout convient à son vaste génie,*
Les livres, les bijoux, les compas, les pompons,
Les vers, les diamans, les biribis, l'optique,
L'algèbre, les soupers, le latin, les jupons,
L'opéra, les procès, le bal et la physique."

How powerfully has Sheridan, in bringing out the same contrasts, shown the difference between the raw material of a thought, and the fine fabric as it comes from the hands of a workman: —

" What motley cares Corilla's mind perplex,
Whom maids and metaphors conspire to vex!
In studious deshabille behold her sit,
A letter'd gossip and a housewife wit:
At once invoking, though for different views,
Her gods, her cook, her milliner, and muse.
Round her strew'd room a frippery chaos lies,
A chequer'd wreck of notable and wise.
Bills, books, caps, couplets, combs, a varied mass,
Oppress the toilet and obscure the glass;
Unfinish'd here an epigram is laid,
And there a mantua-maker's bill unpaid.
There new-born plays foretaste the town's applause,
There dormant patterns pine for future gauze.
A Moral essay now is all her care,
A satire next, and then a bill of fare.
A scene she now projects, and now a dish,
Here Act the First, and here 'Remove with Fish.'

Now, while this eye in a fine frenzy rolls,
That soberly casts up a bill for coals;
Black pins and daggers in one leaf she sticks,
And tears, and threads, and bowls, and thimbles mix."

We must now prepare to follow the subject of this Memoir into a field of display, altogether different, where he was in turn to become an actor before the public himself, and where, instead of inditing lively speeches for others, he was to deliver the dictates of his eloquence and wit from his own lips. However the lovers of the drama may lament this diversion of his talents and doubt whether even the chance of another School for Scandal were not worth more than all his subsequent career, yet to the individual himself, full of ambition and conscious of versatility of powers, such an opening into a new course of action and fame, must have been like one of those sudden turnings of the road in a beautiful country, which dazzle the eyes of the traveller with new glories, and invite him on to untried paths of fertility and sunshine.

It has been before remarked how early, in a majority of instances, the dramatic talent has come to its fullest maturity. Mr. Sheridan would possibly never have exceeded what he had already done, and his celebrity had now reached that point of elevation, where, by a sort of optical deception in the atmosphere of fame, to remain stationary is to seem, in the eyes of the spectators, to fall. He had, indeed, enjoyed only the triumph of talent, and without even descending to those ovations, or minor triumphs, which in general are little more than celebrations of escape from defeat, and to which they who surpass all but themselves, are often capriciously reduced. It is questionable, too, whether, in any other walk of literature, he would have sustained the high reputation which he acquired by the drama. Very rarely have dramatic writers, even of the first rank, exhibited powers of equal rate, when out of the precincts of their own art; while, on the other hand, poets of a more general range, whether epic, lyric, or satiric, have as rarely succeeded on the stage. There is, indeed, hardly one of our celebrated dramatic authors (and the remark might be extended to other countries) who has left works worthy of his reputation in any other line; and Mr. Sheridan, perhaps, might only have been saved from adding to the list of failures, by such a degree of prudence or of indolence as would have prevented him from making the attempt. He may, therefore, be said to have closed his account with literature, when not only the glory of his past successes, but the hopes of all that he might yet have achieved, were set down fully and without any risk of forfeiture, to his credit; and, instead of being left, like Alexander, to sigh for new worlds to vanquish, no sooner were his

triumphs in one sphere of action complete, than another opened to invite him to new conquests.

We have already seen that Politics, from the very commencement of his career, had held divided empire with Literature in the tastes and studies of Mr. Sheridan; and, even in his fullest enjoyment of the smiles of the Comic Muse, while he stood without a rival in *her* affections, the "*Musa severior*" of politics was estranging the constancy of *his*—

> "*Te tenet, absentes alios suspirat amores.*"
>
> "Ev'n while perfection lies within his arms,
> He strays in thought, and sighs for other charms."

Among his manuscripts there are some sheets of an Essay on Absentees, which, from the allusions it contains to the measures then in contemplation for Ireland, must have been written, I rather think, about the year 1778—when the School for Scandal was in its first career of success, and the Critic preparing, at no very long interval, to partake its triumph. It is obvious, from some expressions used in this pamphlet, that his intention was, if not to publish it in Ireland, at least to give it the appearance of having been written there—and, except the pure unmixed motive of rendering a service to his country, by the discussion of a subject so closely connected with her interests, it is difficult to conceive what inducement he could have had to select at that moment such a topic for his pen. The plain, unpretending style of the greater part of the composition sufficiently proves that literary display was not the object of it; while the absence of all criminatory matter against the government precludes the idea of its having originated in party zeal.

As it is curious to observe how soberly his genius could yoke itself to grave matter of fact, after the winged excursions in which it had been indulging, I shall here lay some paragraphs of this pamphlet before the reader.

In describing the effects of the prevailing system of pasturage—one of the evils attributed by him to Absentees—he thus, with occasional irradiations of eloquence and ingenuity, expresses himself: —

"Now it must ever be the interest of the Absentee to place his state in the hands of as few tenants as possible, by which means there will be less difficulty or hazard in collecting his rents, and less intrusted to an agent, if his estate require one. The easiest method of effecting this is by laying the land out for pasturage, and letting it in gross to those who deal only in 'a fatal living crop'—whose produce we are not allowed a market for when manufactured, while we want art, honesty and encouragement to fit it for home consumption. Thus the indolent extravagance of the lord becomes subservient to the interest of a few mercenary graziers—shepherds of most unpastoral principles—while the veteran husbandman

may lean on the shattered, unused plough, and view himself surrounded with flocks that furnish raiment without food. Or, if his honesty be not proof against the hard assaults of penury, he may be led to revenge himself on these dumb innovators of his little field—then learn too late that some portion of the soil is reserved for a crop more fatal even than that which tempted and destroyed him.

"Without dwelling on the particular ill effects of non-residence in this case, I shall conclude with representing that principal and supreme prerogative which the Absentee foregoes—the prerogative of mercy, of charity. The estated resident is invested with a kind of relieving providence—a power to heal the wounds of undeserved misfortune—to break the blows of adverse fortune, and leave chance no power to undo the hopes of honest, persevering industry. There cannot surely be a more happy station than that wherein prosperity and worldly interest are to be best forwarded by an exertion of the most endearing offices of humanity. This is his situation who lives on the soil which furnishes him with means to live It is his interest to watch the devastation of the storm, the ravage of the flood—to mark the pernicious extremes of the elements, and by a judicious indulgence and assistance, to convert the sorrows and repinings of the sufferer into blessings on his humanity. By such a conduct he saves his people from the sin of unrighteous murmurs, and makes Heaven his debtor for their resignation.

"It will be said that the residing in another kingdom will never erase from humane minds the duty and attention which they owe to those whom they have left to cultivate their demesnes. I will not say that absence lessens their humanity, or that the superior dissipation which they enjoy in it contracts their feelings to coarser enjoyments—without this, we know that agents and stewards are seldom intrusted with full powers of aiding and remitting. In some, compassion would be injustice. They are, in general, content with the virtue of justice and punctuality towards their employer; part of which they conceive to be a rigorous exaction of his rents, and, where difficulty occurs, their process is simply to distrain and to eject—a rigour that must ever be prejudicial to an estate, and which, practised frequently, betrays either an original negligence, or want of judgment in choosing tenants, or an extreme inhumanity towards their incidental miscarriages.

"But, granting an undiminished benevolence to exist on the part both of the landlord and the agent, yet can we expect any great exertion of pathetic eloquence to proceed from the latter to palliate any deficiency of the tenants?—or, if there were, do we not know how much lighter an impression is made by distresses related to us than by those which are '*oculis subjecta fidelibus?*" The heart, the seat of charity and compassion, is more accessible to the senses than the understanding. Many, who would be unmoved by any address to the latter, would melt into charity at the eloquent persuasion of silent sorrow. When he *sees* the widow's tear, and hears the orphan's sigh, every one will act with a sudden uniform rectitude, because he acts from the divine impulse of 'free love dealt equally to all.'"

The blind selfishness of those commercial laws which England so

long imposed upon Ireland,—like ligatures to check the circulation of the empire's life-blood,—is thus adverted to :

"Though I have mentioned the decay of trade in Ireland as insufficient to occasion the great increase of emigration, yet is it to be considered as an important ill effect, arising from the same cause. It may be said that trade is now in higher repute in Ireland, and that the exports and imports (which are always supposed the test of it) are daily increasing. This may be admitted to be true, yet cannot it be said that the trade of the kingdom flourishes. The trade of a kingdom should increase in exact proportion to its luxuries, and those of the nations connected with it. Therefore it is no argument to say, that, on examining the accounts of customs fifty years back, they appear to be trebled now; for England, by some sudden stroke, might lose such a proportion of its trade, as would ruin it as a commercial nation, yet the amount of what remained might be tenfold of what it enjoyed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Trade, properly speaking, is the commutations of the product of each country—this extends itself to the exchange of commodities in which art has fixed a price. Where a nation hath free power to export the works of its industry, the balance in such articles will certainly be in its favour. Thus, had we in Ireland power to export our manufactured silks, stuffs, and woollens, we should be assured that it would be our interest to import and cultivate their materials. But, as this is not the case, the gain of individuals is no proof that the nation is benefited by such commerce. For instance, the exportation of unwrought wool may be very advantageous to the dealer, and, through his hands, bring money, or a beneficial return of commodities into the kingdom;—but trace the ill effects of depopulating such tracts of land as are necessary for the support of flocks to supply this branch, and number those who are deprived of supports and employment by it, and so become a dead weight on the community—we shall find that the nation in fact will be the poorer for this apparent advantage. This would be remedied were we allowed to export it manufactured; because the husbandman might get his bread as a manufacturer.

"Another principal cause that the trade may increase, without proportionally benefiting the nation, is that a great part of the stock which carries on the foreign trade of Ireland belongs to those who reside out of the country—thus the ultimate and material profits on it are withdrawn to another kingdom. It is likewise to be observed, that, though the exportations may appear to exceed the importations, yet may this in part arise from the accounts of the former being of a more certain nature, and those of the latter very conjectural, and always falling short of the fact."

Though Mr. Sheridan afterwards opposed a Union with Ireland, the train of reasoning which he pursued in this pamphlet naturally led him to look forward to such an arrangement between the two countries, as, perhaps, the only chance of solving the long-existing problem of their relationship to each other.

"It is the state (he continues), the luxury, and fashions of the wealthy, that give life to the artificers of elegance and taste;—it is their numerous

train that sends the rapid shuttle through the loom,—and, when they leave their country, they not only beggar these dependents, but the tribes that lived by clothing them.

"An extravagant passion for luxuries hath been in all nations a symptom of an approaching dissolution. However in commercial states, while it predominates only among the higher ranks, it brings with it the conciliating advantage of being greatly beneficial to trade and manufactures. But, how singularly unfortunate is that kingdom, where the luxurious passions of the great beggar those who should be supported by them,—a kingdom, whose wealthy members keep equal pace with their numbers in the dissipated and fantastical pursuits of life, without suffering the lower class to glean even the dregs of their vices! While this is the case with Ireland, the prosperity of her trade must be all forced and unnatural; and if, in the absence of its wealthy and estated members, the state already feels all the disadvantages of a Union, it cannot do better than endeavour at a free trade by effecting it in reality."

Having demonstrated, at some length, the general evil of absenteeism, he thus proceeds to enquire into the most eligible remedy for it:—

"The evil complained of is simply the absence of the proprietors of a certain portion of the landed property. This is an evil unprovided against by the legislature;—therefore, we are not to consider whether it might not with propriety have been guarded against, but whether a remedy or alleviation of it can now be attempted consistently with the spirit of the Constitution. On examining all the most obvious methods of attempting this, I believe there will appear but two practicable. The First will be by enacting a law for the frequent summoning the proprietors of landed property to appear *de facto* at stated times. The Second will be the voting a supply to be raised from the estates of such as do never reside in the kingdom.

"The First, it is obvious, would be an obligation of no use, without a penalty was affixed to the breach of it, amounting to the actual forfeiture of the estate of the recusant. This, we are informed, was once the case in Ireland. But at present, whatever advantage the kingdom might reap by it, it could not possibly be reconciled to the genius of the Constitution: and, if the fine were trifling, it would prove the same as the second method, with the disadvantage of appearing to treat as an act of delinquency what in no way infringes the municipal law of the kingdom.

"In the Second method the legislature is, in no respect, to be supposed to regard the *person* of the Absentee. It prescribes no place of residence to him, nor attempts to summon or detain him. The light it takes up the point in is this—that the welfare of the whole is injured by the produce of a certain portion of the soil being sent out of the kingdom. * * * It will be said that the produce of the soil is not exported by being carried to our own markets: but if the value received in exchange for it, whatever it be, whether money or commodities, be exported, it is exactly the same in its ultimate effects as if the grain, flocks, etc. were literally sent to England. In this light, then, if the state is found to suffer by such an exportation, its deducting a small

part from the produce is simply a reimbursing the public, and putting the loss of the public (to whose welfare the interest of individuals is always to be subservient) upon those very members who occasioned that loss.

"This is only to be effected by a tax."

Though to a political economist of the present day much of what is so loosely expressed in these extracts will appear but the crudities of a tyro in the science, yet, at the time when they were written, —when both Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke could expatiate on the state of Ireland, without a single attempt to develope or enforce those simple, but wise principles of commercial policy, every one of which had been violated in the restrictions on her industry,—it was no small merit in Mr. Sheridan to have advanced even thus far in a branch of knowledge so rare and so important.

In addition to his own early taste for politics, the intimacies which he had now formed with some of the most eminent public men of the day must have considerably tended to turn his ambition in that direction. At what time he first became acquainted with Mr. Fox I have no means of ascertaining exactly. Among the letters addressed to him by that statesman, there is one which, from the formality of its style, must have been written at the very commencement of their acquaintance—but, unluckily, it is not dated. Lord John Townshend, who first had the happiness of bringing two such men together, had given the following interesting account of their meeting, and of the impressions which they left upon the minds of each other. His Lordship, however, has not specified the period of this introduction :—

"I made the first dinner-party at which they met, having told Fox that all the notions he might have conceived of Sheridan's talents and genius from the comedy of The Rivals, etc. would fall infinitely short of the admiration of his astonishing powers, which I was sure he would entertain at the first interview. The first interview between them (there were very few present, only Tickell and myself, and one or two more,) I shall never forget. Fox told me, after breaking up from dinner, that he had always thought Hare, after my uncle, Charles Townshend, the wittiest man he ever met with, but that Sheridan surpassed them both infinitely; and Sheridan told me next day that he was quite lost in admiration of Fox, and that it was a puzzle to him to say what he admired most, his commanding superiority of talent and universal knowledge, or his playful fancy, artless manners, and benevolence of heart, which showed itself in every word he uttered."

With Burke Mr. Sheridan became acquainted at the celebrated Turk's Head Club,—and, if any incentive was wanting to his new passion for political distinction, the station to which he saw his eloquent fellow-countryman exalted, with no greater claims from birth

or connection than his own, could not have failed to furnish it. His intimacy with Mr. Windham began, as we have seen, very early at Bath, and the following letter, addressed to him by that gentleman from Norfolk, in the year 1778, is a curious record not only of the first political movements of a person so celebrated as Mr. Windham, but of the interest with which Sheridan then entered into the public measures of the day :—

"*Jan.* 5, 1778.

"I fear my letter will greatly disappoint your hopes [1]. I have no account to send you of my answering Lord Townshend—of hard-fought contests—spirited resolves—ballads, mobs, cockades, and Lord North burnt in effigy. We have had a bloodless campaign, but not from backwardness in our troops, but for the most creditable reason that can be—want of resolution in the enemy to encounter us. When I got down here early this morning, expecting to find a room prepared, a chair set for the president, and nothing wanting but that the orators should begin, I was surprised to learn that no advertisement had appeared on the other part: but that Lord T. having dined at a meeting, where the proposal was received very coldly, had taken fright, and for the time at least had dropped the proposal. It had appeared, therefore, to those whom I applied to (and I think very rightly), that till an advertisement was inserted by them, or was known for certain to be intended, it would not be proper for any thing to be done by us. In this state, therefore, it rests. The advertisement which we agreed upon is left at the printer's, ready to be inserted upon the appearance of one from them. We lie upon our arms, and shall begin to act upon any motion of the enemy. I am very sorry that things have taken this turn, as I came down in full confidence of being able to accomplish something distinguished. I had drawn up, as I came along, a tolerably good paper, to be distributed to-morrow in the streets, and settled pretty well in my head the terms of a protest—besides some pretty smart pieces of oratory, delivered upon Newmarket Heath. I never felt so much disposition to exert myself before—I hope from my never having before so fair a prospect of doing it with success. When the coach comes in, I hope I shall receive a packet from you, which shall not be lost, though it may not be used immediately.

"I must leave off writing, for I have got some other letters to send by to-night's post. Writing in this ink is like speaking with respect to the utter annihilation of what is past;—by the time it gets to you, perhaps, it may have become legible, but I have no chance of reading over my letter myself.

"I shall not suffer this occasion to pass over entirely without benefit.

"Believe me yours most truly,

"W. Windham."

[1] Mr. Windham had gone down to Norfolk, in consequence of a proposed meeting in that county, under the auspices of Lord Townshend, for the purpose of raising a subscription in aid of government, to be applied towards carrying on the war with the American colonies. In about three weeks after the date of this letter, the meeting was held, and Mr. Windham, in a spirited answer to Lord Townshend, made the first essay of his eloquence in public.

"Tell Mrs Sheridan that I hope she will have a closet ready, where I may remain till the heat of the pursuit is over. My friends in France have promised to have a vessel ready upon the coast.

"*Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.*
Queen-Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields."

The first political service rendered by Mr. Sheridan to the party with whom he now closely connected himself, was the active share which he took in a periodical paper called The Englishman, set up by the Whigs for the purpose of seconding, out of parliament, the crimination and invective of which they kept up such a brisk fire within. The intention, as announced by Sheridan in the first number[1], was, like Swift in the Drapier's Letters, to accommodate the style of the publication to the comprehension of persons in "that class of the community, who are commonly called the *honest* and *industrious*." But this plan,—which not even Swift, independent as was his humour of the artifices of style, could adhere to,—was soon abandoned, and there is in most of Sheridan's own papers a finesse and ingenuity of allusion, which only the most cultivated part of his readers could fully enjoy. For instance, in exposing the inconsistency of Lord North, who had lately consented in a Committee of the whole House, to a motion which he had violently opposed in the House itself,—thus, "making (says Sheridan) that respectable assembly disobey its own orders, and the members reject with contempt, under the form of a Chairman, the resolutions they had imposed on themselves under the authority of a Speaker;"—he proceeds in a strain of refined raillery, as little suited to the "honest and industrious" class of the community, as Swift's references to Locke, Molyneux, and Sydney, were to the readers for whom he also professed to write:—

"The burlesque of any plan, I know, is rather a recommendation of it to Your Lordship; and the ridicule you might throw on this assembly, by continuing to support this Athanasian distinction of powers in the unity of an apparently corporate body, might in the end compensate to you for the discredit you have incurred in the attempt.

"A deliberative body of so *uncommon a form*, would probably be deemed a kind of STATE MONSTER by the ignorant and the vulgar. This might at first increase their *awe* for it, and so far counteract Your Lordship's intentions. They would probably approach it with as much reverence as Stephano does the monster in the Tempest: — 'What, one body and two voices — a most delicate monster!' However, they would soon grow familiarised to it, and probably hold it in as little respect as they were wished to do. They would find it on many occasions, a very shallow monster, 'and particularly, a most poor *credulous* monster, —while Your Lordship as keeper, would enjoy every advantage and profit that could be made of it.

[1] Published 13th of March, 1779.

You would have the benefit of the *two voices*, which would be the Monster's great excellencies, and would be peculiarly serviceable to Your Lordship. With 'the forward voice' you would aptly promulgate those vigorous schemes and productive resources, in which Your Lordship's fancy is so pregnant; while 'the backward voice' might be kept solely for *recantation*. The Monster, to maintain its character, must appear no novice in the science of flattery or in the talents of servility,—and while it could never scruple to bear any burdens Your Lordship should please to lay on it, you would always, on the *approach of a storm*, find a shelter under its gabardine."

The most celebrated of these papers was the attack upon Lord George Germaine, written also by Mr. Sheridan,—a composition which, for unaffected strength of style and earnestness of feeling, may claim a high rank among the models of political vituperation. To every generation its own contemporary press seems always more licentious than any that had preceded it; but it may be questioned, whether the boldness of modern libel has ever gone beyond the direct and undisguised personality, with which one cabinet minister was called a liar and another a coward, in this and other writings of the popular party at that period. The following is the concluding paragraph of this paper against Lord George Germaine, which is in the form of a Letter to the Freeholders of England:—

"It would be presuming too much on your attention, at present, to enter into an investigation of the measures and system of war which this minister has pursued,—these shall certainly be the subject of a future paper. At present I shall only observe that, however mortifying it may be to reflect on the ignominy and disasters which this inauspicious character has brought on his country, yet there are consoling circumstances to be drawn even from his ill success. The calamities which may be laid to his account are certainly great; but, had the case been otherwise, it may fairly be questioned whether the example of a degraded and reprobated officer (preposterously elevated to one of the first stations of honour and confidence in the state) directing the military enterprizes of this country with unlooked-for prosperity, might not ultimately be the cause of more extensive evils than even those, great as they are, which we at present experience: whether from so fatal a precedent we might not be led to introduce characters under similar disqualifications into every department:—to appoint Atheists to the mitre, *Jews* to the exchequer,—to select a treasury-bench from the *Justitia*, to place *Brown Dignam* on the woolsack, and Sir Hugh Palliser at the head of the admiralty."

The Englishman, as might be expected from the pursuits and habits of those concerned in it, was not very punctually conducted, and, after many apologies from the publisher for its not appearing at the stated times (Wednesdays), ceased altogether on the 2d of June. From an imperfect sketch of a new Number, found among Mr. Sheridan's manuscripts, it appears that there was an intention of reviving it a short time after—probably towards the autumn of

the same year, from the following allusion to Mr. Gibbon, whose acceptance of a seat at the Board of Trade took place, if I recollect right, in the summer of 1779 :—

"This policy is very evident among the majority in both houses, who, though they make no scruple in private to acknowledge the total incapacity of ministers, yet, in public, speak and vote as if they believed them to have every virtue under heaven; and, on this principle, some gentlemen,—as Mr. Gibbon, for instance,—while, in private, they indulge their opinion pretty freely, will yet, in their zeal for the public good, even condescend to accept a place, in order to give a colour to their confidence in the wisdom of the government."

It is needless to say that Mr. Sheridan had been for some time among the most welcome guests at Devonshire House—that rendezvous of all the wits and beauties of fashionable life, where Politics was taught to wear its most attractive form, and sat enthroned, like Virtue among the Epicureans, with all the graces and pleasures for handmaids.

Without any disparagement of the manly and useful talents, which are at present no where more conspicuous than in the upper ranks of society, it may be owned that for wit, social powers, and literary accomplishements, the political men of the period under consideration formed such an assemblage as it would be flattery to say that our own times can parallel. The natural tendency of the excesses of the French Revolution was to produce in the higher classes of England an increased reserve of manner, and, of course, a proportionate restraint on all within their circle, which have been fatal to conviviality and humour, and not very propitious to wit—subduing both manners and conversation to a sort of polished level, to rise above which is often thought almost as vulgar as to sink below it. Of the greater ease of manners that existed some forty or fifty years ago, one trifling, but not the less significant, indication was the habit, then prevalent among men of high station, of calling each other by such familiar names as Dick, Jack, Tom, etc. [1]—a mode of address, that brings with it, in its very sound, the notion of conviviality and playfulness, and, however unrefined, implies at least, that ease and *sea-room*, in which wit spreads its canvas most fearlessly.

With respect to literary accomplishments, too,—in one branch of which, poetry, almost all the leading politicians of that day distinguished themselves—the change that has taken place in the times, independently of any want of such talent, will fully account for the difference that we witness, in this respect, at present. As the public

[1] Dick Sheridan, Ned Burke, Jack Townshend, Tom Grenville, etc. etc.

mind becomes more intelligent and watchful, statesmen can the less afford to trifle with their talents, or to bring suspicion upon their fitness for their own vocation, by the failures which they risk in deviating into others. Besides, in poetry, the temptation of distinction no longer exists—the commonness of that talent in the market, at present, being such as to reduce the value of an elegant copy of verses, very far below the price it was at, when Mr. Hayley enjoyed an almost exclusive monopoly of the article.

In the clever Epistle, by Tickell, "from the Hon. Charles Fox, partridge-shooting, to the Hon. John Townshend, cruising," some of the most shining persons in that assemblage of wits and statesmen, who gave a lustre to Brooks's Club-House at the period of which we are speaking, are thus agreeably grouped :—

> "Soon as to Brooks's[1] thence thy footsteps bend,
> What gratulations thy approach attend!
> See Gibbon rap his box—auspicious sign
> That classic compliment and wit combine;
> See Beauclerk's cheek a tinge of red surprize,
> And friendship give what cruel health denies; —
> * * * * * * * *
> * * * * * * * *
> On that auspicious night, supremely grac'd
> With chosen guests, the pride of liberal taste,
> Not in contentious heat, nor madd'ning strife,
> Not with the busy ills, nor cares of life,
> We'll waste the fleeting hours—far happier themes
> Shall claim each thought and chase ambition's dreams.
> Each *beauty* that *sublimity* can boast
> *He* best shall tell, who still unites them most.
> Of wit, of taste, of fancy we'll debate,
> If Sheridan, for once, be not too late:
> But scarce a thought on politics we'll spare,
> Unless on Polish politics, with Hare.
> Good-natur'd Devon! oft shall then appear
> The cool complacence of thy friendly sneer:
> Oft shall Fitzpatrick's wit and Stanhope's ease
> And Burgoyne's manly sense unite to please.
> And while each guest attends our varied feats
> Of scattered covies and retreating fleets,
> Me shall they wish some better sport to gain,
> And Thee more glory, from the next campaign."

In the society of such men the destiny of Mr. Sheridan could not

[1] The well-known lines on Brooks himself are perhaps the perfection of this drawing-room style of humour:—

> "And know, I've bought the best champagne from Brooks;
> From liberal Brooks, whose speculative skill
> Is hasty credit, and a distant bill;
> Who, nurs'd in clubs, disdains a vulgar trade,
> Exults to trust, and blushes to be paid."

be long in fixing. On the one side, his own keen thirst for distinction, and, on the other, a quick and sanguine appretiation of the service that such talents might render in the warfare of party, could not fail to hasten the result that both desired.

His first appearance before the public as a political character was in conjunction with Mr. Fox, at the beginning of the year 1780, when the famous Resolutions on the State of the Representation, signed by Mr. Fox as chairman of the Westminster Committee, together with a Report on the same subject from the Sub-Committee, signed by Sheridan, were laid before the public. Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage were the professed objects of this meeting; and the first of the Resolutions, subscribed by Mr. Fox, stated that "Annual Parliaments are the undoubted right of the people of England."

Notwithstanding this strong declaration, it may be doubted whether Sheridan was, any more than Mr. Fox, a very sincere friend to the principle of Reform; and the manner in which he masked his disinclination or indifference to it was strongly characteristic both of his humour and his tact. Aware that the wild scheme of Cartwright and others, which these Resolutions recommended, was wholly impracticable, he always took refuge in it when pressed upon the subject, and would laughingly advise his political friends to do the same:—"Whenever any one," he would say, "proposes to you a specific plan of Reform, always answer that you are for nothing short of Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage—there you are safe." He also had evident delight, when talking on this question, in referring to a jest of Burke, who said that there had arisen a new party of Reformers, still more orthodox than the rest, who thought Annual Parliaments far from being sufficiently frequent, and who, founding themselves upon the latter words of the statute of Edward III., that "a parliament shall be holden every year once, and *more often if need be*," were known by the denomination of the *Oftener-if-need-bes*. "For my part," he would add, in relating this, "I am an Oftener-if-need-be." Even when most serious on the subject (for to the last, he professed himself a warm friend to Reform), his arguments had the air of being ironical and insidious. To Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage, he would say, the principles of representation naturally and necessarily led,—any less extensive proposition was a base compromise and a dereliction of right; and the first encroachment on the people was the act of Henry VI., which limited the power of election to forty-shilling freeholders within the county, whereas the real right was in the "outrageous and excessive" number of people, by whom

the preamble recites [1] that the choice had been made of late.—Such were the arguments by which he affected to support his cause, and it is not difficult to detect the eyes of the snake glistening from under them.

The dissolution of parliament that took place in the autumn of this year (1780) afforded at length the opportunity to which his ambition had so eagerly looked forward. It has been said, I know not with what accuracy, that he first tried his chance of election at Honiton—but Stafford was the place destined to have the honour of first choosing him for its representative; and it must have been no small gratification to his independent spirit, that, unfurnished as he was with claims from past political services, he appeared in parliament, not as the nominee of any aristocratic patron, but as member for a borough, which, whatever might be its purity in other respects, at least enjoyed the freedom of choice. Elected conjointly with Mr. Monckton, to whose interest and exertions he chiefly owed his success, he took his seat in the new parliament which met in the month of October;—and, from that moment giving himself up to the pursuit of politics, bid adieu to the worship of the Dramatic Muse for ever: —

"*Comœdia luget;*
Scena est deserta: hinc ludus risusque jocusque
Et numeri innumeri simul omnes collacrumarunt."

Comedy mourns—the Stage neglected sleeps—
Ev'n Mirth in tears his languid laughter steeps,
And Song, through all her various empire, weeps.

CHAPTER VII.

Unfinished Plays and Poems.

Before I enter upon the sketch of Mr. Sheridan's political life, I shall take this opportunity of laying before the reader such information with respect to his unfinished literary designs, both dramatic and poetic, as the papers in my possession enable me to communicate.

Some of his youthful attempts in literature have already been mentioned, and there is a dramatic sketch of his, founded on the Vicar of Wakefield, which, from a date on the manuscript (1768), appears to have been produced at a still earlier age, and when he was only in his seventeenth year. A scene of this piece will be

[1] "Elections of knights of shires have now of late been made by very great outrageous and excessive number of people, dwelling within the same counties, of the which most part was people of small substance and of no value" 8 H. 6. c. 7.

sufficient to show how very soon his talent for lively dialogue displayed itself: —

"SCENE II.

"THORNHILL *and* ARNOLD.

"*Thornhill.* Nay, prithee, Jack, no more of that if you love me. What, shall I stop short with the game in full view? Faith, I believe the fellow's turned puritan. What think you of turning methodist, Jack? You have a tolerable good canting countenance, and, if escaped being taken up for a Jesuit, you might make a fortune in Moor-fields.

"*Arnold.* I was serious, Tom.

"*Thorn.* Splenetic you mean. Come, fill your glass, and a truce to your preaching. Here's a pretty fellow has let his conscience sleep for these five years, and has now plucked morality from the leaves of his grandmother's bible, beginning to declaim against what he has practised half his life-time. Why, I tell you once more, my schemes are all come to perfection. I am now convinced Olivia loves me—at our last conversation, she said she would rely wholly on my honour.

"*Arn.* And therefore you would deceive her.

"*Thorn.* Why no—deceive her?—why—indeed—as to that—but—but, for God's sake, let me hear no more on this subject, for 'faith you make me sad, Jack. If you continue your admonitions, I shall begin to think you have yourself an eye on the girl. You have promised me your assistance, and when you came down into the country, were as hot on the scheme as myself: but, since you have been two or three times with me at Primrose's, you have fallen off strangely. No encroachments, Jack, on my little rosebud—if you have a mind to beat up game in this quarter, there's her sister—but no poaching.

"*Arn.* I am not insensible to her sister's merit, but have no such views as you have. However, you have promised me that if you find in this lady that real virtue which you so firmly deny to exist in the sex, you will give up the pursuit, and, foregoing the low considerations of fortune, make atonement by marriage.

"*Thorn.* Such is my serious resolution.

"*Arn.* I wish you'd forego the experiment. But, you have been so much in raptures with your success, that I have, as yet, had no clear account how you came acquainted in the family.

"*Thorn.* Oh, I'll tell you immediately. You know Lady Patchet?

"*Arn.* What, is she here?

"*Thorn.* It was by her I was first introduced. It seems that, last year, her ladyship's reputation began to suffer a little; so that she thought it prudent to retire for a while, till people learned better manners or got worse memories. She soon became acquainted with this little family, and, as the wife is a prodigious admirer of quality, grew in a short time to be very intimate, and imagining that she may one day make her market of the girls, has much ingratiated herself with them. She introduced me—I drank, and abused this degenerate age with the father—promised wonders to the mother for all her brats—praised her gooseberry wine,

and ogled the daughters, by which means in three days I made the progress I related to you.

Arn. You have been expeditious indeed. I fear where that devil Lady Patchet is concerned there can be no good—but is there not a son?

"*Thorn.* Oh! the most ridiculous creature in nature. He has been bred in the country, a bumpkin all his life, till within these six years, when he was sent to the University, but, the misfortunes that have reduced his father falling out, he is returned, the most ridiculous animal you ever saw, a conceited disputing blockhead. So there is no great matter to fear from *his* penetration. But come, let us begone, and see this moral family, we shall meet them coming from the field, and you will see a man who was once in affluence, maintaining by hard labour a numerous family.

"*Arn.* Oh! Thornhill, can you wish to add infamy to their poverty?

[*Exeunt.*"

There also remain among his papers three Acts of a Drama, without a name,—written evidently in haste, and with scarcely any correction,—the subject of which is so wild and unmanageable, that I should not have hesitated in referring it to the same early date, had not the introduction into one of the scenes of "Dry be that tear, be hush'd that sigh," proved it to have been produced after that pretty song was written.

The chief personages upon whom the story turns are a band of outlaws, who, under the name and disguise of *Devils*, have taken up their residence in a gloomy wood, adjoining a village, the inhabitants of which they keep in perpetual alarm by their incursions and apparitions. In the same wood resides a hermit, secretly connected with this band, who keeps secluded within his cave the beautiful Reginilla, hid alike from the light of the sun and the eyes of men. She has, however, been indulged in her prison with a glimpse of a handsome young huntsman, whom she believes to be a phantom, and is encouraged in her belief by the hermit, by whose contrivance this huntsman (a prince in disguise) has been thus presented to her. The following is—as well as I can make it out from a manuscript not easily decipherable—the scene that takes place between the fair recluse and her visitant. The style, where style is attempted, shows, as the reader will perceive, a taste yet immature and unchastened:—

"*Scene draws, and discovers* Reginilla *asleep in the Cave.*

"*Enter* Pevidor *and other Devils, with the* Huntsman—*unbind him, and exeunt.*

"*Hunts.* Ha! Where am I now? Is it indeed the dread abode of guilt, or refuge of a band of thieves? it cannot be a dream. (*sees* Reginilla.) Ha! if this be so, and I *do* dream, may I never wake—it is—my beating

heart acknowledges my dear, gentle Reginilla. I'll not wake her, lest, if it be a phantom, it should vanish. Oh, balmy breath! but for thy soft sighs that come to tell me it is no image, I should believe. . . . (*bends down towards her.*) a sigh from her heart!—thus let me arrest thee on thy way. (*kisses her.*) A deeper blush has flushed her cheek—sweet modesty! that even in sleep is conscious and resentful.—She will not wake, and yet some fancy calls up those frequent sighs—how her heart beats in its ivory cage, like an imprisoned bird—or as if to reprove the hand that dares approach its sanctuary! Oh, would she but wake, and bless this gloom with her bright eyes!—Soft, here's a lute—perhaps her soul will hear the call of harmony.

[1] "Oh yield, fair lids, the treasures of my heart,
Release those beams that make this mansion bright;
From her sweet sense, Slumber, tho' sweet thou art,
Begone, and give the air she breathes in light.

"Or while, oh Sleep, thou dost those glances hide,
Let rosy slumbers still around her play,
Sweet as the cherub Innocence enjoy'd,
When in thy lap, new born, in smiles he lay.

"And thou, oh Dream, that com'st her sleep to cheer,
Oh take my shape, and play a lover's part;
Kiss her from me, and whisper in her ear,
Till her eyes shine, 'tis night within my heart.

"*Reg.* (*waking.*) The phantom, father, (*seizes his hand.*) ah, do not, do not wake me then. (*rises.*)

"*Hunts.* (*kneeling to her.*) Thou beauteous sun of this dark world, that mak'st a place, so like the cave of death, a heaven to me, instruct me how I may approach thee—how address thee and not offend.

"*Reg.* Oh how my soul would hang upon those lips! speak on—and yet, methinks, he should not kneel so—why are you afraid, Sir? indeed, I cannot hurt you.

"*Hunts.* Sweet innocence, I'm sure thou would'st not.

"*Reg.* Art thou not he to whom I told my name, and didst thou not say thine was—

"*Hunts.* Oh blessed be the name that then thou told'st—it has been ever since my charm, and kept me from distraction. But, may I ask how such sweet excellence as thine could be hid in such a place?

"*Reg.* Alas, I know not—for such as thou I never saw before, nor any like myself.

"*Hunts.* Nor like thee ever shall—but would'st thou leave this place, and live with such as I am?

"*Reg.* Why may not you live here with such as I?

"*Hunts.* Yes—but I would carry thee where all above an azure canopy extends, at night bedropt with gems, and one more glorious lamp, that

[1] I have taken the liberty here of supplying a few rhymes and words that are wanting in the original copy of the song. The last line of all runs thus in the manuscript:—

"Till her eye shines, I live in darkest night."

which, not rhyming as it ought, I have ventured to alter as above.

yields such bashful light as love enjoys—while underneath, a carpet shall be spread of flowers to court the pressure of thy step, with such sweet whispered invitations from the leaves of shady groves or murmuring of silver streams, that thou shalt think thou art in Paradise.

"*Reg.* Indeed!

"*Hunts.* Ay, and I'll watch and wait on thee all day, and cull the choicest flowers, which while thou bind'st in the mysterious knot of love, I'll tune for thee no vulgar lays, or tell thee tales shall make thee weep yet please thee—while thus I press thy hand, and warm it thus with kisses.

"*Reg.* I doubt thee not—but then my Governor has told me many a tale of faithless men, who court a lady but to steal her peace and fame, and then to leave her.

"*Hunts.* Oh never such as thou art—witness all.....

"*Reg.* Then wherefore couldst thou not live here? For I do feel, tho' tenfold darkness did surround this spot, I could be blest, would you but stay here; and, if it made you sad to be imprison'd thus, I'd sing and play for thee, and dress thee sweetest fruits, and, though you chid me, would kiss thy tear away and hide my blushing face upon thy bosom—indeed, I would. Then what avails the gaudy day and all the evil things I'm told inhabit there, to those who have within themselves all that delight and love and heaven can give.

"*Hunts.* My angel, thou hast indeed the soul of love.

"*Reg.* It is no ill thing, is it?

"*Hunts.* Oh most divine—it is the immediate gift of heaven, which steals into our breast * * *

If thou art sad, I'll kiss away
The tears..... that flow.

" If thou would'st play, I'll kiss thee till I blush,
Then hide that blush upon thy breast,
If thou would'st sleep.....
Shall rock thy aching head to rest.

" *Hunts.* My soul's wonder, I will never leave thee.

" (*The dance.—Allemande by two Bears.*)

" *Enter* PEVIDOR.

" *Pev.* So fond, so soon! I cannot bear to see it. What ho, within (*Devils enter.*) secure him.

(*Seize and bind the Huntsman.*"

The Duke or sovereign of the country, where these events are supposed to take place, arrives at the head of a military force, for the purpose of investing the haunted wood, and putting down, as he says, those " lawless renegades, who, in infernal masquerade, make a hell around him." He is also desirous of consulting the holy hermit of the wood, and availing himself of his pious consolations and prayers—being haunted with remorse for having criminally gained possession of the crown by contriving the shipwreck of the rightful heir, and then banishing from the court his most virtuous counsellors. In addition to these causes of disquietude, he has lately lost, in a mysterious manner, his only son, who, he supposes, has fallen a victim to these Satanic outlaws, but who, on the contrary, it appears, has voluntarily become an associate of their band, and is amusing himself, heedless of his noble father's sorrow, by making love, in the disguise of a dancing bear, to a young village coquette of the name of Mopsa. A short specimen of the manner, in which this last farcical incident is managed, will show how wide even Sheridan was, at first, of that true vein of comedy, which, on searching deeper into the mine, he so soon afterwards found: —

" SCENE.—*The Inside of the Cottage.*—MOPSA, LUBIN (*her father*), *and* COLIN (*her lover*) *discovered.*

" *Enter* PEVIDOR, *leading the Bear, and singing.*

" And he dances, dances, dances,
And goes upright like a Christian swain,
And he shows you pretty fancies,
Nor ever tries to shake off his chain.

" *Lubin.* Servant, master. Now, Mopsa, you are happy—it is, indeed, a handsome creature. What country does your bear come from?

" *Pev.* Dis bear, please your worship, is of de race of dat bear of St. Antony, who was de first convert he made in de woods. St. Antony

bade him never more meddle with man, and de bear observed de com mand to his dying day.

"*Lub.* Wonderful!

"*Pev.* Dis generation be all de same—all born widout toots.

"*Colin.* What, can't he bite? (*puts his finger to the Bear's mouth, who bites him.*) Oh Lord, no toots! why you—

"*Pev.* Oh dat be only his gum.

(*Mopsa laughs.*

"*Col.* For shame, Mopsa—now, I say, Maister Lubin, mustn't she give me a kiss to make it well?

"*Lub.* Ay, kiss her, kiss her, Colin.

"*Col.* Come, Miss.

(*Mopsa runs to the Bear, who kisses her.*)

The following scene of the Devils, drinking in their subterraneous dwelling, though cleverly imagined, is such as, perhaps, no cookery of style could render palateable to an English audience.

"Scene.—*The Devil's Cave.*

"1*st Dev.* Come, Urial, here's to our resurrection.

"2*d Dev.* It is a toast I'd scarcely pledge—by my life, I think we're happier here.

"3*d Dev.* Why, so think I—by Jove, I would despise the man, who could but wish to rise again to earth, unless we were to lord there. What! sneaking pitiful in bondage, among vile money-scrapers, treacherous friends, fawning flatterers—or, still worse, deceitful mistresses. Shall we, who reign lords here, again lend ourselves to swell the train of tyranny and usurpation? By my old father's memory, I'd rather be the blindest mole that ever skulked in darkness, the lord of one poor hole where he might say 'I'm master here.'

"2*d Dev.* You are too hot—where shall concord be found, if even the devils disagree?—Come, fill the glass, and add thy harmony—while we have wine to enlighten us, the sun be hanged! I never thought he gave so fine a light, for my part—and then, there are such vile inconveniences—high winds and storms, rains, etc.—oh hang it! living on the outside of the earth is like sleeping on deck, when one might, like us, have a snug birth in the cabin.

"1*st Dev.* True, true,—Helial, where is thy catch?

> "In the earth's centre let me live,
> There, like a rabbit will I thrive,
> Nor care if fools should call my life infernal;
> While men on earth crawl lazily about,
> Like snails upon the surface of the nut,
> We are, like maggots, feasting in the kernel.

"1*st Dev.* Bravo, by this glass; Meli, what say you?

"3*d Dev.* Come, here's to my Mina—I used to toast her in the upper regions.

"1*st Dev.* Ay, we miss them here.

" *Glee.*

" What's a woman good for?
Rat me, sir, if I know.
* * * * * *
She's a savour to the glass,
An excuse to make it pass.
* * * * * *

" *1st Dev.* I fear we are like the wits above, who abuse women only because they can't get them,—and after all, it must be owned they are a pretty kind of creatures.

" *All.* Yes, yes.

" *Catch.*

" 'Tis woman after all
Is the blessing of this ball,
'Tis she keeps the balance of it even.
We are devils, it is true,
But had we women too,
Our Tartarus would turn to a Heaven!"

A scene in the Third Act, where these devils bring the prisoners whom they have captured to trial, is an overcharged imitation of the satire of Fielding, and must have been written, I think, after a perusal of that author's Satirical Romance, "A Journey from this World to the Next,"—the first half of which contains as much genuine humour and fancy as are to be found in any other production of the kind. The interrogatories of Minos in that work suggested, I suspect, the following scene: —

" *Enter a number of Devils.—Others bring in* Ludovico.

" *1st Dev.* Just taken, in the wood, sir, with two more.

" *Chorus of Devils.*

" Welcome, welcome * *
* * * * * *

" *Pev.* What art thou?

" *Ludov.* I went for a man in the other world.

" *Pev.* What sort of man?

" *Ludov.* A soldier, at your service.

" *Pev.* Wast thou in the battle of——?

" *Ludov.* Truly I was.

" *Pev.* What was the quarrel?

" *Ludov.* I never had time to ask. The children of peace, who make our quarrels, must be Your Worship's informants there.

" *Pev.* And art thou not ashamed to draw the sword for thou know'st not what—and to be the victim and food of others' folly?

" *Ludov.* Vastly.

" *Pev.* (*to the Devils.*) Well, take him for to-day, and only score his skin and pepper it with powder—then chain him to a cannon, and let the Devils practise at his head—his be the reward who hits it with a single ball.

" *Ludov.* Oh mercy, mercy!

" *Pev.* Bring Savodi.

(*A Devil brings in* SAVODI.)

" *Chorus as before.*

" Welcome, welcome, etc.

" *Pev.* Who art thou?

" *Sav.* A courtier, at Your Grace's service.

" *Pev.* Your name?

" *Sav.* Savodi, an' please Your Highnesses.

" *Pev.* Your use?

" *Sav.* A foolish utensil of state—a clock kept in the waiting-chamber to count the hours.

" *Pev.* Are you not one of those who fawn and lie, and cringe like spaniels to those a little higher, and take revenge by tyranny on all beneath?

" *Sav.* Most true, Your Highnesses.

" *Pev.* Is't not thy trade to promise what thou canst not do,—to gull the credulous of money, to shut the royal door on unassuming merit—to catch the scandal for thy master's ear, and stop the people's voice.....

" *Sav.* Exactly, an' please Your Highnesses' Worship.

" *Pev.* Thou dost not now deny it?

" *Sav.* Oh no, no, no.

" *Pev.* Here—baths of flaming sulphur!—quick—stir up the cauldron of boiling lead—this crime deserves it.

" *1st Dev.* Great Judge of this infernal place, allow him but the mercy of the court.

" *Sav.* Oh kind Devil!—yes, Great Judge, allow.

" *1st Dev.* The punishment is undergone already—truth from him is something.

" *Sav.* Oh, most unusual—sweet devil!

" *1st Dev.* Then, he is tender, and might not be able to endure—

" *Sav.* Endure! I shall be annihilated by the thoughts of it—dear devil.

" *1st Dev* Then let him, I beseech you, in scalding brimstone be first soaked a little, to inure and prepare him for the other.

" *Sav.* Oh hear me, hear me!

" *Pev.* Well, be it so.

(*Devils take him out and bring in* PAMPHILES.)

" *Pev.* This is he we rescued from the ladies—a dainty one, I warrant.

" *Pamphil.* (*affectedly*) This is Hell, certainly by the smell.

" *Pev.* What, art thou a soldier too?

" *Pamphil.* No, on my life—a Colonel, but no soldier—innocent even of a review, as I exist.

" *Pev.* How rose you then? come, come—the truth.

" *Pamphil.* Nay, be not angry, sir—if I was preferred it was not my fault—upon my soul, I never did any thing to incur preferment.

" *Pev.* Indeed! what was thy employment then, friend?

" *Pamphil.* Hunting—

" *Pev.* 'Tis false.

"*Pamphil* Hunting women's reputations.

"*Pev.* What, thou wert amorous?

"*Pamphil.* No, on my honour, sir, but vain, confounded vain—the character of bringing down my game was all I wished, and, like a true sportsman, I would have given my birds to my pointers.

"*Pev.* This crime is new—what shall we do with him?" etc. etc.

This singular Drama does not appear to have been ever finished. With respect to the winding up of the story, the hermit, we may conclude, would have turned out to be the banished counsellor, and the devils, his followers; while the young huntsman would most probably have proved to be the rightful heir of the dukedom.

In a more crude and unfinished state are the fragments that remain of his projected opera "The Foresters." To this piece, (which appears to have been undertaken at a later period than the preceding one,) Mr. Sheridan often alluded in conversation, particularly when any regret was expressed at his having ceased to assist Old Drury with his pen,—"wait (he would say smiling) till I bring out my Foresters." The plot, as far as can be judged from the few meagre scenes that exist, was intended to be an improvement upon that of the Drama just described—the Devils being transformed into Foresters, and the action commencing, not with the loss of a son but the recovery of a daughter, who had fallen by accident into the hands of these free-booters. At the opening of the piece the young lady has just been restored to her father by the heroic Captain of the Foresters, with no other loss than that of her heart, which she is supected of having left with her preserver. The list of the Dramatis Personæ (to which however he did not afterwards adhere) is as follows:—

Old Oscar.
Young Oscar.
Colona.
Morven.
Harold.
Nico.
Miza.
Malvina.
Allanda.
Dorcas.
Emma.

To this strange medley of nomenclature is appended a memorandum—"*Vide* Petrarch for names."

The first scene represents the numerous lovers of Malvina rejoicing at her return, and celebrating it by a chorus; after which Oscar, her father, holds the following dialogue with one of them:—

"*Osc.* I thought, son, you would have been among the first and most eager to see Malvina upon her return.

"*Colin.* Oh, father, I would give half my flock to think that my presence would be welcome to her.

"*Osc.* I am sure you have never seen her prefer any one else.

"*Colin.* There's the torment of it—were I but once sure that she loved another better, I think I should be content—at least she should not know but that I was so. My love is not of that jealous sort that I should pine to see her happy with another—nay, I could even regard the man that would make her so.

"*Osc.* Haven't you spoke with her since her return?

"*Colin.* Yes, and I think she is colder to me than ever. My professions of love used formerly to make her laugh, but now they make her weep—formerly she seemed wholly insensible; now, alas, she seems to feel—but as if addressed by the wrong person." etc. etc.

In a following scene are introduced two brothers, both equally enamoured of the fair Malvina, yet preserving their affection unaltered towards each other. With the recollection of Sheridan's own story fresh in our minds, we might suppose that he meant some reference to it in this incident, were it not for the exceeding *niaiserie* that he has thrown into the dialogue. For instance :—

Osc. But we are interrupted—here are two more of her lovers—brothers, and rivals, but friends.

"*Enter* Nico *and* Lubin.

"So, Nico,—how comes it you are so late in your enquiries after your mistress?

"*Nico.* I should have been sooner; but Lubin would stay to make himself fine—though he knows he has no chance of appearing so to Malvina.

"*Lubin.* No, in truth—Nico says right—I have no more chance than himself.

"*Osc.* However, I am glad to see you reconciled, and that you live together, as brothers should do.

"*Nico.* Yes, ever since we found your daughter cared for neither of us, we grew to care for one another. There is a fellowship in adversity that is consoling; and it is something to think that Lubin is as unfortunate as myself.

"*Lubin.* Yes, we are well matched—I think Malvina dislikes him, if possible more than me, and that's a great comfort.

"*Nico.* We often sit together, and play such woeful tunes on our pipes, that the very sheep are moved at it.

Osc. But why don't you rouse yourselves, and since you can meet with no requital of your passion, return the proud maid scorn for scorn.

"*Nico.* Oh mercy, no—we find a great comfort in our sorrow—don't we, Lubin?

"*Lubin.* Yes, if I meet no crosses, I shall be undone in another twelvemonth—I let all go to wreck and ruin.

"*Osc.* But suppose Malvina should be brought to give you encouragement.

"*Nico.* Heaven forbid! that would spoil all.

"*Lubin.* Truly, I was almost assured within this fortnight that she was going to relax.

"*Nico.* Ay, I shall never forget how alarmed we were at the appearance of a smile one day," etc. etc.

Of the poetical part of this opera, the only specimens he has left are a skeleton of a chorus, beginning "Bold Foresters we are," and the following song, which, for grace and tenderness, is not unworthy of the hand that produced The Duenna:—

"We two, each other's only pride,
Each other's bliss, each other's guide,
Far from the world's unhallow'd noise,
Its coarse delights and tainted joys,
Through wilds will roam and deserts rude—
For, Love, thy home is solitude.

"There shall no vain pretender be,
To court thy smile and torture me,
No proud superior there be seen,
But nature's voice shall hail thee, queen.

"With fond respect and tender awe,
I will receive thy gentle law,
Obey thy looks, and serve thee still,
Prevent thy wish, foresee thy will,
And, added to a lover's care,
Be all that friends and parents are."

But, of all Mr. Sheridan's unfinished designs, the Comedy which he meditated on the subject of Affectation is that of which the abandonment is most to be regretted. To a satirist, who would not confine his ridicule to the mere outward demonstrations of this folly, but would follow and detect it through all its windings and disguises, there could hardly perhaps be a more fertile theme. Affectation, merely of *manner*, being itself a sort of acting, does not easily admit of any additional colouring on the stage, without degenerating into farce; and, accordingly, fops and fine ladies—with very few exceptions—are about as silly and tiresome in representation as in reality. But the aim of the dramatist, in this comedy, would have been far more important and extensive;—and how anxious he was to keep before his mind's eye the whole wide horizon of folly which his subject opened upon him, will appear from the following list of the various species of Affectation, which I have found written by him, exactly as I give it, on the inside cover of the memorandum-book, that contains the only remaining vestiges of this play:—

"An Affectation of Business.
of Accomplishments.
of Love of Letters and Wit.
Music.
of Intrigue.
of Sensibility.
of Vivacity.
of Silence and Importance.
of Modesty.
of Profligacy.
of Moroseness."

In this projected comedy he does not seem to have advanced as far as even the invention of the plot or the composition of a single scene. The memorandum-book alluded to—on the first leaf of which he had written in his neatest hand (as if to encourage himself to begin) "Affectation"—contains, besides the names of three of the intended personages, Sir Babble Bore, Sir Peregrine Paradox, and Feignwit, nothing but unembodied sketches of character, and scattered particles of wit, which seem waiting, like the imperfect forms and seeds in chaos, for the brooding of genius to nurse them into system and beauty.

The reader will not, I think, be displeased at seeing some of these curious materials here. They will show that in this work, as well as in the School for Scandal, he was desirous of making the vintage of his wit as rich as possible, by distilling into it every drop that the collected fruits of his thought and fancy could supply. Some of the jests are far-fetched, and others, perhaps, abortive—but it is pleasant to track him in his pursuit of a point, even when he misses. The very failures of a man of real wit are often more delightful than the best successes of others—the quick-silver, even in escaping from his grasp, shines; "it still eludes him, but it glitters still."

I shall give the memorandums as I find them, with no other difference, than that of classing together those that have relation to the same thought or subject.

"*Character.*—Mr. Bustle.

"A man who delights in hurry and interruption—will take any one's business for them—leaves word where all his plagues may follow him—governor of all hospitals, etc.—share in Ranelagh—speaker every where, from the Vestry to the House of Commons—'I am not at home—gad, now he has heard me and I must be at home.'—'Here am I so plagued, and there is nothing I love so much as retirement and quiet.'—'You never sent after me.'—Let servants call in to him such a message as 'Tis nothing but the window-tax,' the hiding in a room that communicates.—A young man tells him some important business in the middle of fifty trivial inter-

ruptions, and the calling in of idlers; such as fidlers, wild-beast men, foreigners with recommendatory letters, etc.—answers notes on his knee, 'and so your uncle died?—for your obliging enquiries—and left you an orphan—to cards in the evening.'

"Can't bear to be doing nothing.—'Can I do any thing for any body any where?'—'Have been to the Secretary—written to the Treasury.'—'Must proceed to meet the Commissioners, and write Mr. Price's little boy's exercise.'—The most active idler and laborious trifler.

"He does not in reality love business—only the appearance of it. 'Ha! ha! did my Lord say that I was always very busy?—What, plagued to death?'

"Keeps all his letters and copies—'Mem. to meet the Hackneycoach Commissioners—to arbitrate between, etc., etc.'

"Contrast with the man of indolence, his brother.—'So, brother, just up! and I have been, etc., etc.'—one will give his money from indolent generosity, the other his time from restlessness—''Twill be shorter to pay the bill than look for the receipt.'—Files letters, answered and unanswered—'Why, here are more unopened than answered!'

"He regulates every action by a love for fashion—will grant annuities though he doesn't want money—appear to intrigue, though constant, to drink, though sober—has some fashionable vices—affects to be distressed in his circumstances, and, when his new vis-à-vis comes out, procures a judgment to be entered against him—wants to lose, but by ill-luck wins five thousand pounds.

"One who changes sides in all arguments the moment any one agrees with him.

"An irresolute arguer, to whom it is a great misfortune that there are not three sides to a question—a libertine in argument; conviction, like enjoyment, palls him, and his rakish understanding is soon satiated with truth—more capable of being faithful to a paradox—'I love truth as I do my wife; but sophistry and paradoxes are my mistresses—I have a strong domestic respect for her, but for the other the passion due to a mistress.

"One, who agrees with every one for the pleasure of speaking their sentiments for them—so fond of talking that he does not contradict only because he can't wait to hear people out.

"A tripping casuist, who veers by others' breath, and gets on to information by tacking between the two sides—like a hoy, not made to go straight before the wind.

"The more he talks, the farther he is off the argument, like a bowl on a wrong bias.

"What are the affectations you chiefly dislike?

"There are many in this company, so I'll mention others.—To see two people affecting intrigue, having their assignations in public places only: he, affecting a warm pursuit, and the lady, acting the hesitation of re-

treating virtue—'Pray, ma'am, don't you think, etc.'—while neither party have words between 'em to conduct the preliminaries of gallantry, nor passion to pursue the object of it.

"A plan of public flirtation—not to get beyond a profile.

"Then I hate to see one, to whom heaven has given real beauty, settling her features at the glass of fashion, while she speaks—not thinking so much of what she says as how she looks, and more careful of the action of her lips than of what shall come from them.

"A pretty woman studying looks and endeavouring to recollect an ogle, like Lady——, who has learned to play her eyelids like Venetian blinds [1].

"An old woman endeavouring to put herself back to a girl.

"A true trained wit lays his plan like a general—foresees the circumstances of the conversation—surveys the ground and contingencies—detaches a question to draw you into the palpable ambuscade of his ready-made joke.

"A man intriguing, only for the reputation of it—to his confidential servant: 'Who am I in love with now?'—The newspapers give you so and so—you are laying close siege to Lady L. in the Morning Post, and have succeeded with Lady G. in the Herald—Sir F. is very jealous of you in the Gazetteer.'—'Remember to-morrow, the first thing you do, to put me in love with Mrs. C.'

"'I forgot to forget the billet-doux at Brooks's.'—'By the bye, an't I in love with you?'—'Lady L. has promised to meet me in her carriage to-morrow—where is the most public place?'

"'You were rude to her!'—'Oh no, upon my soul, I made love to her directly.'

"An old man, who affects intrigue, and writes his own reproaches in the Morning Post, trying to scandalise himself into the reputation of being young, as if he could obscure his age by blotting his character—though never so little candid as when he's abusing himself.

"'Shall you be at Lady——'s?—I'm told the Bramin is to be there, and the new French philosopher.'—'No—it will be pleasanter at Lady ——'s conversazione—the cow with two heads will be there.'

"'I shall order my valet to shoot me the very first thing he does in the morning.'

---

[1] This simile is repeated in various shapes through his manuscripts—"She moves her eyes up and down like Venetian blinds"—"Her eyelids play like a Venetian blind," etc. etc.

"'You are yourself affected and don't know it—you would pass for morose.'

"He merely wanted to be singular, and happened to find the character of moroseness unoccupied in the society he lived with.

"He certainly has a great deal of fancy and a very good memory; but with a perverse ingenuity he employs these qualities as no other person does—for he employs his fancy in his narratives, and keeps his recollections for his wit—when he makes his jokes, you applaud the accuracy of his memory, and 'tis only when he states his facts, that you admire the flights of his imagination '.

"A fat woman trundling into a room on castors—in sitting can only lean against her chair—rings on her fingers, and her fat arms strangled with bracelets, which belt them like corded brawn—rolling and heaving when she laughs with the rattles in her throat, and a most apoplectic ogle—you wish to draw her out, as you would an opera-glass.

"A long lean man, with all his limbs rambling—no way to reduce him to compass, unless you could double him like a pocket rule—with his arms spread, he'd lie on the bed of Ware like a cross on a Good Friday bun—standing still, he is a pilaster without a base—he appears rolled out or run up against a wall—so thin, that his front face is but the moiety of a profile—if he stands cross-legged, he looks like a caduceus, and put him in a fencing attitude, you would take him for a piece of chevaux-de-frise—to make any use of him, it must be as a spontoon or a fishing-rod—when his wife's by, he follows like a note of admiration—see them together, one's a mast, and the other all hulk—she's a dome and he's built like a glass-house—when they part, you wonder to see the steeple separate from the chancel, and were they to embrace, he must hang round her neck like a skein of thread on a lace-maker's bolster—to sing her praise you should choose a rondeau, and to celebrate him you must write all Alexandrines.

"I wouldn't give a pin to make fine men in love with me—every coquette can do that, and the pain you give these creatures is very trifling. I love out-of-the-way conquests; and as I think my attractions are singular, I would draw singular objects.

"The loadstone of true beauty draws the heaviest substances—not like the fat dowager, who frets herself into warmth to get the notice of a few *papier mâché* fops, as you rub Dutch sealing-wax to draw paper.

"If I were inclined to flatter, I would say that, as you are unlike other women, you ought not to be won as they are. Every woman can be gained by time, therefore you ought to be by a sudden impulse. Sighs, devotion, attention weigh with others; but they are so much your due, that no one should claim merit from them. . . .

[1] The reader will find how much this thought was improved upon afterwards.

"You should not be swayed by common motives—how heroic to form a marriage for which no human being can guess the inducement—what a glorious unaccountableness! All the world will wonder what the devil you could see in me; and, if you should doubt your singularity, I pledge myself to you that I never yet was indured by woman; so that I should owe every thing to the effect of your bounty, and not by my own superfluous deserts make it a debt, and so lessen both the obligation and my gratitude. In short, every other woman follows her inclination, but you, above all things, should take me, if you do not like me. You will, besides, have the satisfaction of knowing that we are decidedly the worst match in the kingdom—a match, too, that must be all your own work, in which fate could have no hand, and which no foresight could foresee.

"A lady who affects poetry.—'I made regular approaches to her by sonnets and rebusses—a rondeau of circumvallation—her pride sapped by an elegy, and her reserve surprised by an impromptu—proceeding to storm with Pindarics, she, at last, saved the further effusion of ink by a capitulation.'

"Her prudish frowns and resentful looks are as ridiculous as 'twould be to see a board with notice of spring-guns set in a highway, or of steel-traps in a common—because they imply an insinuation that there is something worth plundering where one would not, in the least, suspect it.

"The expression of her face is at once a denial of all love-suit, and a confession that she never was asked—the sourness of it arises not so much from her aversion to the passion, as from her never having had an opportunity to show it.—Her features are so unfortunately formed that she could never dissemble or put on sweetness enough to induce any one to give her occasion to show her bitterness.—I never saw a woman to whom you would more readily give credit for perfect chastity.

"*Lady Clio.* 'What am I reading?'—'have I drawn nothing lately?—is the work-bag finished?—how accomplished I am!—has the man been to untune the harpsichord?—does it look as if I had been playing on it?

"'Shall I be ill to-day?—shall I be nervous?'—'Your La'ship was nervous yesterday.'—'Was I?—then I'll have a cold—I haven't had a cold this fortnight—a cold is becoming—no—I'll not have a cough; that's fatiguing—I'll be quite well.'—'You become sickness—your La'ship always looks vastly well when you're ill.'

"'Leave the book half read and the rose half finished—you know I love to be caught in the fact.'

"One who knows that no credit is ever given to his assertions, has the more right to contradict his words.

"He goes the western circuit, to pick up small fees and impudence.

"A new wooden leg for Sir Charles Easy.

"An ornament which proud peers wear all the year round—chimney-sweepers only on the first of May.

"In marriage if you possess any thing very good, it makes you eager to get every thing else good of the same sort.

"The critic when he gets out of his carriage should always recollect, that his footman behind is gone up to judge as well as himself.

"She might have escaped in her own clothes, but I suppose she thought it more romantic to put on her brother's regimentals."

The rough sketches and fragments of poems, which Mr. Sheridan left behind him, are numerous; but those among them that are sufficiently finished to be cited, bear the marks of having been written when he was very young, and would not much interest the reader — while of the rest it is difficult to find four consecutive lines, that have undergone enough of the *toilette* of composition to be presentable in print. It was his usual practice, when he undertook any subject in verse, to write down his thoughts first in a sort of poetical prose, — with, here and there, a rhyme or a metrical line, as they might occur—and then, afterwards to reduce, with much labour, this anomalous compound to regular poetry. The birth of his prose being, as we have already seen, so difficult, it may be imagined how painful was the travail of his verse. Indeed, the number of tasks which he left unfinished are all so many proofs of that despair of perfection, which those best qualified to attain it are always the most likely to feel.

There are some fragments of an Epilogue, apparently intended to be spoken in the character of a woman of fashion, which give a lively notion of what the poem would have been, when complete. The high carriages, that had just then come into fashion, are thus adverted to:—

"My carriage stared at!—none so high or fine—
Palmer's mail-coach shall be a sledge to mine.
* * * * * * * *
No longer now the youths beside us stand,
And talking lean, and leaning press the hand;
But, ogling upward, as aloft we sit,
Straining, poor things, their ancles and their wit,

And, much too short the inside to explore,
Hang like supporters half way up the door."

The approach of a "veteran husband," to disturb these flirtations and chase away the lovers, is then hinted at :—

"To persecuted virtue yield assistance,
And for one hour teach younger men their distance,
Make them, in very spite, appear discreet,
And mar the public mysteries of the street."

The affectation of appearing to make love, while talking on indifferent matters, is illustrated by the following simile :—

"So when dramatic statesmen talk apart,
With practis'd gesture and heroic start,
The plot's their theme, the gaping galleries guess,
While Hull and Fearon think of nothing less."

The following lines seem to belong to the same Epilogue :—

"The Campus Martius of St. James's Street,
Where the beau's cavalry pace to and fro,
Before they take the field in Rotten Row;
Where Brooks's Blues and Weltze's Light Dragoons
Dismount in files, and ogle in platoons."

He had also begun another Epilogue, directed against female gamesters, of which he himself repeated a couplet or two to Mr. Rogers a short time before his death, and of which there remain some few scattered traces among his papers :—

"A night of fretful passion may consume
All that thou hast of beauty's gentle bloom,
And one distemper'd hour of sordid fear
Print on thy brow the wrinkles of a year[1].
* * * * * * *
Great figure loses, little figure wins.
* * * * * * * *
Ungrateful blushes and disorder'd sighs,
Which love disclaims, nor even shame supplies.
* * * * * * * *
Gay smiles, which once belong'd to mirth alone,
And starting tears, which pity dares not own."

The following stray couplet would seem to have been intended for his description of Corilla :—

"A crayon Cupid, redd'ning into shape,
Betrays her talents to design and scrape."

The Epilogue, which I am about to give, though apparently fi-

[1] These four lines, as I have already remarked, are taken—with little change of the words, but a total alteration of the sentiment—from the verses which he addressed to Mrs. Sheridan in the year 1773. See page 57.

nished, has not, as far as I can learn, yet appeared in print, nor am I at all aware for what occasion it was intended.

"In this gay month when, through the sultry hour,
The vernal sun denies the wonted shower,
When youthful Spring usurps maturer sway,
And pallid April steals the blush of May,
How joys the rustic tribe, to view display'd
The liberal blossom and the early shade!
But ah! far other air our soil delights;
Here 'charming weather' is the worst of blights.
No genial beams rejoice our rustic train,
Their harvest's still the better for the rain.
To summer suns our groves no tribute owe,
They thrive in frost, and flourish best in snow.
When other woods resound the feather'd throng,
Our groves, our woods, are destitute of song.
The thrush, the lark, all leave our mimic vale,
No more we boast our Christmas nightingale;
Poor Rosignol—the wonder of his day,
Sung through the winter—but is mute in May.
Then bashful spring, that gilds fair nature's scene,
O'ercasts our lawns, and deadens every green;
Obscures our sky, embrowns the wooden shade,
And dries the channel of each tin cascade!
Oh hapless we, whom such ill fate betides,
Hurt by the beam which cheers the world besides
Who love the ling'ring frost, nice chilling showers,
While Nature's *Benefit*—is death to ours;
Who, witch-like, best in noxious mists perform,
Thrive in the tempest, and enjoy the storm.
O hapless we—unless your generous care
Bids us no more lament that Spring is fair,
But plenteous glean from the dramatic soil,
The vernal harvest of our winter's toil.
For, April suns to us no pleasure bring—
Your presence here is all we feel of Spring;
May's riper beauties here no bloom display—
Your fostering smile alone proclaims it May."

A poem upon Windsor Castle, half ludicrous and half solemn, appears, from the many experiments which he made upon it, to have cost him considerable trouble. The Castle, he says,

"Its base a mountain, and itself a rock,
In proud defiance of the tempests' rage,
Like an old grey-hair'd veteran stands each shock—
The sturdy witness of a nobler age."

He then alludes to the "cockney" improvements that had lately taken place, among which the venerable castle appears, like

"A helmet on a Macaroni's head—
Or like old Talbot, turn'd into a fop,
With coat embroider'd and scratch wig at top."

Some verses, of the same mixed character, on the short duration of life and the changes that death produces, thus begin :—

> " Of that same tree which gave the box,
> Now rattling in the hand of FOX,
> Perhaps his coffin shall be made.—"

He then rambles into prose, as was his custom, on a sort of knight-errantry after thoughts and images :—" The lawn thou hast chosen for thy bridal shift—thy shroud may be of the same piece. That flower thou hast bought to feed thy vanity—from the same tree thy corpse may be decked. Reynolds shall, like his colours, fly; and Brown, when mingled with the dust, manure the grounds he once laid out. Death is life's second childhood; we return to the breast from whence we came, are weaned, * * *"

There are a few detached lines and couplets of a poem, intended to ridicule some fair invalid, who was much given to falling in love with her physicians :—

> " Who felt her pulse, obtained her heart."

The following couplet, in which he characterises an amiable friend of his, Dr. Bain, with whom he did not become acquainted till the year 1792, proves these fragments to have been written after that period :—

> " Not savage * * * nor gentle BAIN—
> She was in love with Warwick Lane."

An " Address to the Prince," on the exposed style of women's dress, consists of little more than single lines, not yet wedded into couplets; such as—" The more you show, the less we wish too see." —" And bare their bodies, as they mask their minds," etc. This poem, however, must have been undertaken many years after his entrance into Parliament, as the following curious political memorandum will prove :—" I like it no better for being from France—whence all ills come—altar of liberty, begrimed at once with blood and mire."

There are also some Anacreontics—lively, but boyish and extravagant. For instance, in expressing his love of bumpers :—

> " Were mine a goblet that had room
> For a whole vintage in its womb,
> I still would have the liquor swim
> An inch or two above the brim."

The following specimen is from one of those poems, whose length and completeness prove them to have been written at a time of life when he was more easily pleased, and had not yet arrived at that state of glory and torment for the poet, when

" *Toujours mécontent de ce qu'il vient de faire,*
Il plaît à tout le monde, et ne saurait se plaire."—

" The Muses call'd, the other morning,
On Phœbus, with a friendly warning
That invocations came so fast,
They must give up their trade at last,
And if he meant to' assist them all,
The aid of Nine would be too small.
Me then, as clerk, the Council chose,
To tell this truth in humble prose.—

But Phœbus, possibly intending
To show what all their hopes must end in,
To give the scribbling youths a sample,
And frighten them by my example,
Bade me ascend the poet's throne,
And give them verse—much like their own.

" Who has not heard each poet sing
The powers of Heliconian spring?
Its noble virtues we are told
By all the rhyming crew of old.—
Drink but a little of its well,
And straight you could both write and spell,
While such rhyme-giving pow'rs run through it,
A quart would make an epic poet." etc. etc.

A poem on the miseries of a literary drudge begins thus promisingly :—

" Think ye how dear the sickly meal is bought,
By him who works at verse and trades in thought?"

The rest is hardly legible; but there can be little doubt that he would have done this subject justice;—for he had himself tasted of the bitterness with which the heart of a man of genius overflows, when forced by indigence to barter away (as it is here expressed) " the reversion of his thoughts," and

" Forestall the blighted harvest of his brain."

It will be easily believed that, in looking over the remains, both dramatic and poetical, from which the foregoing specimens are taken, I have been frequently tempted to indulge in much ampler extracts. It appeared to me, however, more prudent, to rest satisfied with the selections here given; for, while less would have disappointed the curiosity of the reader, more might have done injustice to the memory of the author.

CHAPTER VIII.

His first speeches in Parliament.—Rockingham administration.—Coalition.—India Bill.

THE period at which Mr. Sheridan entered upon his political career was, in every respect, remarkable. A persevering and vindictive war against America, with the folly and guilt of which the obstinacy of the Court and the acquiescence of the people are equally chargeable, was fast approaching that crisis, which every unbiassed spectator of the contest had long foreseen, — and at which, however humiliating to the haughty pretensions of England, every friend to the liberties of the human race rejoiced. It was, perhaps, as difficult for this country to have been long and virulently opposed to such principles as the Americans asserted in this contest, without being herself corrupted by the cause which she maintained, as it was for the French to have fought, in the same conflict, by the side of the oppressed, without catching a portion of that enthusiasm for liberty, which such an alliance was calculated to inspire. Accordingly, while the voice of Philosophy was heard along the neighbouring shores, speaking aloud those oracular warnings, which preceded the death of the Great Pan of Despotism, the courtiers and lawyers of England were, with an emulous spirit of servility, advising and sanctioning such strides of power, as would not have been unworthy of the most dark and slavish times.

When we review, indeed, the history of the late reign, and consider how invariably the arms and councils of Great Britain, in her Eastern wars, her conflict with America, and her efforts against revolutionary France, were directed to the establishment and perpetuation of despotic principles, it seems little less than a miracle that her own liberty should have escaped with life from the contagion. Never, indeed, can she be sufficiently grateful to the few patriot spirits of this period, to whose courage and eloquence she owes the high station of freedom yet left to her; — never can her sons pay a homage too warm to the memory of such men as a Chatham, a Fox, and a Sheridan; who, however much they may have sometimes sacrificed to false views of expediency, and, by compromise with friends and coalition with foes, too often weakened their hold upon public confidence; however the attraction of the Court may have sometimes made them librate in their orbit, were yet the saving lights of liberty in those times, and alone preserved the ark of the Constitution from foundering in the foul and troubled waters that encompassed it.

Not only were the public events, in which Mr. Sheridan was

now called to take a part, of a nature more extraordinary and awful than had often been exhibited on the theatre of politics, but the leading actors in the scene were of that loftier order of intellect, which Nature seems to keep in reserve for the ennoblement of such great occasions. Two of these, Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox, were already in the full maturity of their fame and talent,—while the third, Mr. Pitt, was just upon the point of entering, with the most auspicious promise, into the same splendid career;

Nunc cuspide Patris
Inclytus, Herculeas olim moture sagittas."

Though the administration of that day, like many other ministries of the same reign, was chosen more for the pliancy than the strength of its materials, yet Lord North himself was no ordinary man, and, in times of less difficulty and under less obstinate dictation, might have ranked as a useful and most popular minister. It is true, as the defenders of his measures state, that some of the worst aggressions upon the rights of the Colonies had been committed before he succeeded to power. But his readiness to follow in these rash footsteps, and to deepen every fatal impression which they had made; — his insulting reservation of the Tea Duty, by which he contrived to embitter the only measure of concession that was wrung from him;—the obsequiousness, with which he made himself the channel of the vindictive feelings of the court, in that memorable declaration (rendered so truly mock heroic by the event) that "a total repeal of the Port duties could not be thought of, till America was prostrate at the feet of England;"—all deeply involve him in the shame of that disastrous period, and identify his name with measures as arbitrary and headstrong, as have ever disgraced the annals of the English monarchy.

The playful wit and unvarying good-humour of this nobleman formed a striking contrast to the harsh and precipitate policy, which it was his lot, during twelve stormy years, to enforce: — and, if his career was as headlong as the torrent near its fall, it may also be said to have been as shining and as smooth. These attractive qualities secured to him a considerable share of personal popularity; and, had fortune ultimately smiled on his councils, success would, as usual, have reconciled the people of England to any means, however arbitrary, by which it had been attained. But the calamities, and, at last, the hopelessness of the conflict, inclined them to moralise upon its causes and character. The hour of Lord North's ascendant was now passing rapidly away, and Mr. Sheridan could not have joined the Opposition at a conjuncture more favourable to the excitement of his powers, or more bright in the views which it opened upon his ambition.

He made his first speech in Parliament on the 20th of November, 1780, when a petition was presented to the House, complaining of the undue election of the sitting members (himself and Mr. Monckton) for Stafford. It was rather lucky for him that the occasion was one in which he felt personally interested, as it took away much of that appearance of anxiety for display, which might have attended his first exhibition upon any general subject. The fame, however, which he had already acquired by his literary talents, was sufficient, even on this question, to awaken all the curiosity and expectation of his audience; and, accordingly, we are told in the report of his speech, that "he was heard with particular attention, the House being uncommonly still while he was speaking." The indignation, which he expressed on this occasion at the charges brought by the petition against the electors of Stafford, was coolly turned into ridicule by Mr. Rigby, Paymaster of the forces. But Mr. Fox, whose eloquence was always ready at the call of good-nature, and, like the shield of Ajax, had "ample room and verge enough, to protect not only himself but his friends, came promptly to the aid of the young orator; and, in reply to Mr. Rigby, observed, that "though those ministerial members, who chiefly robbed and plundered their constituents, might afterwards affect to despise them, yet gentlemen, who felt properly the nature of the trust allotted to them, would always treat them and speak of them with respect."

It was on this night, as Woodfall used to relate, that Mr. Sheridan, after he had spoken, came up to him in the gallery, and asked, with much anxiety, what he thought of his first attempt. The answer of Woodfall, as he had the courage afterwards to own, was, "I am sorry to say I do not think that this is your line—you had much better have stuck to your former pursuits." On hearing which, Sheridan rested his head upon his hand for a few minutes, and then vehemently exclaimed, "It is in me, however, and, by G—, it shall come out."

It appears, indeed, that upon many persons besides Mr. Woodfall the impression produced by this first essay of his oratory was far from answerable to the expectations that had been formed. The chief defect remarked in him was a thick and indistinct mode of delivery, which, though he afterwards greatly corrected it, was never entirely removed.

It is not a little amusing to find him in one of his early speeches, gravely rebuking Mr. Rigby and Mr. Courtenay [1] for the levity and raillery with which they treated the subject before the House,

[1] Feb. 26.—On the second reading of the Bill for the better regulation of His Majesty's Civil List Revenue.

— thus condemning the use of that weapon in other hands, which soon after became so formidable in his own. The remarks by which Mr. Courtenay (a gentleman, whose lively wit found afterwards a more congenial air on the benches of Opposition) provoked the reprimand of the new senator for Stafford, are too humorous to be passed over without, at least, a specimen of their spirit. In ridiculing the conduct of the opposition, he observed :—

"Oh liberty! Oh virtue! Oh my country! had been the pathetic, though fallacious cry of former Oppositions; but the present he was sure acted on purer motives. They wept over their bleeding country, he had no doubt. Yet the patriot "eye in a fine frenzy rolling" sometimes deigned to cast a wishful squint on the riches and honours enjoyed by the minister and his venal supporters. If he were not apprehensive of hazarding a ludicrous allusion (which he knew was always improper on a serious subject), he would compare their conduct to that of the sentimental alderman in one of Hogarth's prints, who, when his daughter is expiring, wears indeed a parental face of grief and solicitude, but it is to secure her diamond ring which he is drawing gently from her finger."

"Mr. Sheridan (says the report) rose and reprehended Mr. Courtenay for turning every thing that passed into ridicule; for having introduced into the House a style of reasoning, in his opinion, every way unsuitable to the gravity and importance of the subjects that came under their discussion. If they would not act with dignity, he thought they might, at least, debate with decency. He would not attempt to answer Mr. Courtenay's arguments, for it was impossible seriously to reply to what, in every part, had an infusion of ridicule in it. Two of the honourable gentleman's similes, however, he must take notice of. The one was his having insinuated that Opposition was envious of those who basked in court sunshine; and desirous merely to get into their places. He begged leave to remind the honourable gentleman that, though the sun afforded a genial warmth, it also occasioned an intemperate heat, that tainted and infected every thing it reflected on. That this excessive heat tended to corrupt as well as to cherish; to putrefy as well as to animate; to dry and soak up the wholesome juices of the body politic, and turn the whole of it into one mass of corruption. If those, therefore, who sat near him did not enjoy so genial a warmth as the honourable gentleman, and those who like him kept close to the noble Lord in the blue ribbon, he was certain they breathed a purer air, an air less infected and less corrupt."

This florid style, in which Mr. Sheridan was not very happy, he but rarely used in his speeches afterwards.

The first important subject that drew forth any thing like a display of his oratory was a motion which he made on the 5th of March, 1781, "For the better regulation of the Police of Westminster." The chief object of the motion was to expose the unconstitutional exercise of the prerogative that had been assumed, in employing the military to suppress the late riots, without waiting for the authority of the civil power. These disgraceful riots,

which proved to what Christianly consequences the cry of "No Popery" may lead, had the effect, which follows all tumultuary movements of the people, of arming the Government with new powers, and giving birth to doctrines and precedents permanently dangerous to liberty. It is a little remarkable that the policy of blending the army with the people, and considering soldiers as citizens, which both Montesquieu and Blackstone recommend as favourable to freedom, should, as applied by Lord Mansfield on this occasion, be pronounced, and perhaps with more justice, hostile to it;—the tendency of such a practice being, it was said, to weaken that salutary jealousy, with which the citizens of a free state should ever regard a soldier, and thus familiarise the use of this dangerous machine, in every possible service to which capricious power may apply it. The opposition did not deny that the measure of ordering out the military, and empowering their officers to act at discretion without any reference to the civil magistrate, was, however unconstitutional not only justifiable but wise, in a moment of such danger. But the refusal of the Minister to acknowledge the illegality of the proceeding by applying to the House for an Act of Indemnity, and the transmission of the same discretionary orders to the soldiery throughout the country where no such imminent necessity called for it, were the points upon which the conduct of the Government was strongly, and not unjustly, censured.

Indeed, the manifest design of the Ministry, at this crisis, to avail themselves of the impression produced by the riots, as a means of extending the frontier of their power, and fortifying the doctrines by which they defended it, spread an alarm among the friends of constitutional principles, which the language of some of the advocates of the Court was by no means calculated to allay. Among others, a Noble Earl,—one of those awkward worshippers of power, who bring ridicule alike upon their idol and themselves,—had the foolish effrontery, in the House of Lords, to eulogise the moderation which His Majesty had displayed, in not following the recent example of the king of Sweden, and employing the sword, with which the hour of difficulty had armed him, for the subversion of the Constitution and the establishment of despotic power. Though this was the mere ebullition of an absurd individual, yet the bubble on the surface often proves the strength of the spirit underneath, and the public were justified by a combination of circumstances, in attributing designs of the most arbitrary nature to such a Court and such an Administration. Meetings were accordingly held in some of the principal counties, and resolutions passed, condemning the late unconstitutional employment of the military. Mr. Fox had adverted to it strongly at the opening of the Session, and it is a proof of the

estimation in which Mr. Sheridan already stood with his party, that he was the person selected to bring forward a motion, upon a subject in which the feelings of the public were so much interested. In the course of his speech he said :—

"If this doctrine was to be laid down, that the Crown could give orders to the military to interfere, when, where, and for what length of time it pleases, then we might bid farewell to freedom. If this was the law, we should then be reduced to a military government of the very worst species, in which we should have all the evils of a despotic state, without the discipline or the security. But we were given to understand, that we had the best protection against this evil, in the virtue, the moderation, and the constitutional principles of the sovereign. No man upon earth thought with more reverence than himself of the virtues and moderation of the sovereign; but this was a species of liberty which he trusted would never disgrace an English soil. The liberty that rested on the virtuous inclinations of any one man, was but suspended despotism: the sword was not indeed upon their necks, but it hung by the small and brittle thread of human will."

The following passage of this speech affords an example of that sort of antithesis of epithet, which, as has been already remarked, was one of the most favourite contrivances of his style :—

"Was not the conduct of that man or men criminal, who had permitted those Justices to continue in the commission? Men of *tried inability* and *convicted deficiency!* Had no attempt been made to establish some more effectual system of police, in order that we might still depend upon the remedy of the bayonet, and that the military power might be called in to the aid of *contrived weakness* and *deliberate inattention?*"

One of the few instances in which he ever differed with his friend, Mr. Fox, occurred during this session, upon the subject of a Bill which the latter introduced for the Repeal of the Marriage Act, and which he prefaced by a speech as characteristic of the ardour, the simplicity, the benevolence and fearlessness of his disposition, as any ever pronounced by him in public. Some parts, indeed, of this remarkable speech are in a strain of feeling so youthful and romantic, that they seem more fit to be addressed to one of those Parliaments of Love, which were held during the times of Chivalry, than to a grave assembly employed about the sober realities of life, and legislating with a view to the infirmities of human nature.

The hostility of Mr. Fox to the Marriage Act was hereditary, as it had been opposed with equal vehemence by his father, on its first introduction in 1753, when a debate not less memorable took place, and when Sir Dudley Ryder, the Attorney general of the day, did not hesitate to advance, as one of his arguments in favour of the Bill, that it would tend to keep the aristocracy of the country pure,

and prevent their mixture by intermarriage with the mass of the people. However this anxiety for the "streams select" of noble blood, or views, equally questionable, for the accumulation of property in great families, may have influenced many of those with whom the Bill originated,—however cruel, too, and mischievous, some of its enactments may be deemed, yet the general effect which the measure was intended to produce, of diminishing as much as possible the number of imprudent marriages, by allowing the pilotage of parental authority to continue till the first quicksands of youth are passed, is, by the majority of the civilised world, acknowledged to be desirable and beneficial. Mr. Fox, however, thought otherwise, and though—"bowing," as he said, "to the prejudices of mankind,"—he consented to fix the age at which young people should be marriageable without the consent of parents, at sixteen years for the woman and eighteen for the man, his own opinion was decidedly for removing all restriction whatever, and for leaving the "heart of youth," which, in these cases, was "wiser than the head of age," without limit or controul, to the choice which its own desires dictated.

He was opposed in his arguments, not only by Mr. Sheridan, but by Mr. Burke, whose speech on this occasion was found among his manuscripts after his death, and is enriched, though short, by some of those golden sentences, which he "scattered from his urn" upon every subject that came before him [1]. Mr. Sheridan, for whose opinions upon this subject the well-known history of his own marriage must have secured no ordinary degree of attention, remarked that—

"His honourable friend, who brought in the Bill, appeared not to be aware that, if he carried the clause enabling girls to marry at sixteen, he would do an injury to that liberty of which he had always shown himself the friend, and promote domestic tyranny, which he could consider only as little less intolerable than public tyranny. If girls were allowed to marry at sixteen, they would, he conceived, be abridged of that happy freedom of intercourse, which modern custom had introduced between the youth of both sexes; and which was, in his opinion, the best nursery of happy marriages. Guardians would, in that case, look on their wards with a jealous eye, from a fear that footmen and those about them might

[1] In alluding to Mr. Fox's too favourable estimate of the capability of very young persons to choose for themselves, he pays the following tribute to his powers:—"He is led into it by a natural and to him inevitable and real mistake, that the ordinary race of mankind advance as fast towards maturity of judgment and understanding as he has done." His concluding words are:—"Have mercy on the youth of both sexes; protect them from their ignorance and inexperience; protect one part of life by the wisdom of another; protect them by the wisdom of laws and the care of nature."

take advantage of their tender years and immature judgment, and persuade them into marriage, as soon as they attained the age of sixteen."

It seems somewhat extraordinary that, during the very busy interval which passed between Mr. Sheridan's first appearance in Parliament and his appointment under Lord Rockingham's administration in 1782, he should so rarely have taken a part in the debates that occurred—interesting as they were, not only from the importance of the topics discussed, but from the more than usual animation now infused into the warfare of parties, by the last desperate struggles of the Ministry and the anticipated triumph of the Opposition. Among the subjects, upon which he appears to have been rather unaccountably silent, was the renewal of Mr. Burke's Bill for the Regulation of the Civil List,—an occasion memorable as having brought forth the maiden speech of Mr. Pitt, and witnessed the first accents of that eloquence, which was destined, ere long, to sound, like the shell of Misenus, through Europe, and call kings and nations to battle by its note. The debate upon the legality of petitions from delegated bodies, in which Mr. Dunning sustained his high and rare character of a patriot lawyer;—the bold proposal of Mr. Thomas Pitt, that the Commons should withhold the supplies, till pledges of amendment in the administration of public affairs should be given;—the Bill for the exclusion of Excise Officers and Contractors from Parliament, which it was reserved for a Whig Administration to pass;—these and other great constitutional questions, through which Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox fought, side by side, lavishing at every step the inexhaustible ammunition of their intellect, seem to have passed away without once calling into action the powers of their new and brilliant auxiliary, Sheridan.

The affairs of Ireland, too, had assumed at this period, under the auspices of Mr. Grattan and the example of America, a character of grandeur, as passing as it was bright,—but which will long be remembered with melancholy pride by her sons, and as long recall the memory of that admirable man, to whose patriotism she owed her brief day of freedom, and upon whose name that momentary sunshine of her sad history rests. An opportunity of adverting to the events, which had lately taken place in Ireland, was afforded by Mr. Fox in a motion for the re-commitment of the Mutiny Bill; and on this subject, perhaps, the silence of Mr. Sheridan may be accounted for, from his reluctance to share the unpopularity attached by his countrymen to those high notions of the supremacy of England, which, on the great question of the independence of the Irish Parliament, both Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke were known to entertain [1].

[1] As the few beautiful sentences spoken by Burke on this occasion, in support

Even on the subject of the American war, which was now the important point that called forth all the resources of attack and defence on both sides, the co-operation of Mr. Sheridan appears to have been but rare and casual. The only occasions, indeed, connected with this topic upon which I can trace him as having spoken at any length, were the charges brought forward by Mr. Fox against the Admiralty, for their mismanagement of the naval affairs of 1781, and the Resolution of censure on His Majesty's Ministers moved by Lord John Cavendish. His remarks in the latter debate upon the two different sets of opinions, by which (as by the double soul, imagined in Xenophon) the speaking and the voting of Mr. Rigby were actuated, are very happy :—

"The Right Hon. Gentleman, however, had acted in this day's debate with perfect consistency. He had assured the House that he thought the Noble Lord ought to resign his office; and yet he would give his vote for his remaining in it. In the same manner he had long declared, that he thought the American war ought to be abandoned; yet had uniformly given his vote for its continuance He did not mean, however, to insinuate any motives for such conduct;—he believed the Right Hon. Gentleman to have been sincere; he believed that, as a member of Parliament, as a Privy Counsellor, as a private gentleman, he had always detested the American war as much as any man; but that he had never been able to persuade the Paymaster that it was a bad war; and unfortunately, in whatever character he spoke, it was the Paymaster who always voted in that House."

The infrequency of Mr. Sheridan's exertions upon the American question combines with other circumstances to throw some doubts upon an anecdote, which has been, however, communicated to me as coming from an authority, worthy in every respect of the most implicit belief. He is said to have received, towards the close of this war, a letter from one of the leading persons of the American Government, expressing high admiration of his talents and political principles, and informing him that the sum of twenty thousand pounds had been deposited for him in the hands of a certain banker.

of his friend's motion, have been somewhat strangely omitted in the professed Collection of all his Speeches, I shall give them here as they are reported in the Parliamentary History:—"Mr. Burke said, so many and such great revolutions had happened of late, that he was not much surprised to hear the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Jenkinson) treat the loss of the supremacy of this country over Ireland as a matter of very little consequence. Thus, one star, and that the brightest ornament of our orrery, having been suffered to be lost, those who were accustomed to inspect and watch our political heaven ought not to wonder that it should be followed by the loss of another.—

So star would follow star, and light light,
Till all was darkness and eternal night."

as a mark of the value which the American people attached to his services in the cause of liberty. To this Mr. S. returned an answer (which, as well as the letter, was seen, it is said, by the person with whom the anecdote originated) full of the most respectful gratitude for the opinion entertained of his services, but begging leave to decline a gift under such circumstances. That this would have been the nature of his answer, had any such proposal occurred, the generally high tone of his political conduct forbids us to feel any doubt,—but, with respect to the credibility of the transaction altogether, it is far less easy to believe that the Americans had so much money to give, than that Mr. Sheridan should have been sufficiently high-minded to refuse it.

Not only were the occasions very few and select, on which he offered himself to the attention of the House at this period, but, whenever he did speak, it was concisely and unpretendingly, with the manner of a person who came to learn a new road to fame,—not of one who laid claim to notice upon the credit of the glory he brought with him. Mr. Fox used to say that he considered his conduct in this respect as a most striking proof of his sagacity and good taste;—such rare and unassuming displays of his talents being the only effectual mode he could have adopted, to win on the attention of his audience and gradually establish himself in their favour. He had, indeed, many difficulties and disadvantages to encounter, of which his own previous reputation was not the least. Not only did he risk a perilous comparison between his powers as a speaker and his fame as a writer, but he had also to contend with that feeling of monopoly, which pervades the more worldly classes of talent, and which would lead politicians to regard as an intruder upon their craft, a man of genius thus aspiring to a station among them, without the usual qualifications of either birth or apprenticeship to entitle him to it'. In an assembly too, whose deference for rank and property is such as to render it lucky that these instruments of influence are so often united with honesty and talent, the son of an actor and proprietor of a theatre had, it must be owned, most fearful odds

[1] There is an anecdote strongly illustrative of this observation, quoted by Lord John Russel in his able and lively work "On the affairs of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht."—Mr. Steele (in alluding to Sir Thomas Hanmer's opposition to the Commercial Treaty in 1714) said, "I rise to do him honour"—on which many members who had before tried to interrupt him, called out 'Tatler, Tatler;' and, as he went down the House, several said 'It is not so easy a thing to speak in the House;' 'He fancies, because he can scribble, etc. etc.'—Slight circumstances, indeed, (adds Lord John,) but which show at once the indisposition of the House to the Whig party, and the natural envy of mankind, long ago remarked by Cicero, towards all who attempt to gain more than one kind of pre-eminence.

against him, in entering into competition with the sons of Lord Holland and Lord Chatham.

With the same discretion that led him to obtrude himself but seldom on the House, he never spoke at this period but after careful and even verbal preparation. Like most of our great orators at the commencement of their careers, he was in the habit of writing out his speeches before he delivered them; and, though subsequently he scribbled these preparatory sketches upon detached sheets, I find that he began by using for this purpose the same sort of copy-books, which he had employed in the first rough draughts of his plays.

However ill the affairs of the country were managed by Lord North, in the management of Parliament few ministers have been more smoothly dexterous; and through the whole course of those infatuated measures, which are now delivered over, without appeal, to the condemnation of History, he was cheered along by as full and triumphant majorities, as ever followed in the wake of ministerial power. At length, however, the spirit of the people, that last and only resource against the venality of parliaments and the obstinacy of kings, was roused from its long and dangerous sleep by the unparalleled exertions of the Opposition leaders, and spoke out with a voice, always awfully intelligible, against the men and the measures that had brought England to the brink of ruin. The effect of this popular feeling soon showed itself in the upper regions. The country-gentlemen, those birds of political omen, whose migrations are so portentous of a change of weather, began to flock in numbers to the brightening quarter of Opposition; and, at last, Lord North, after one or two signal defeats (in spite even of which the Court for some time clung to him, as the only hope of its baffled, but persevering revenge), resigned the seals of office in the month of March, 1782, and an entirely new administration was formed under the promising auspices of the Marquis of Rockingham.

Mr. Sheridan, as might be expected, shared in the triumph of his party, by being appointed one of the Under Secretaries of State; and, no doubt, looked forward to a long and improving tenure of that footing in office which his talents had thus early procured for him. But, however prosperous on the surface the complexion of the ministry might be, its intestine state was such as did not promise a very long existence. Whiggism is a sort of political Protestantism, and pays a similar tax for the freedom of its creed, in the multiplicity of opinions which that very freedom engenders — while true Toryism, like Popery, holding her children together by the one common doctrine of the infallibility of the Throne, takes care to repress any schism inconvenient to their general interest, and keeps

them, at least for all intents and purposes of place-holding, unanimous.

Between the two branches of Opposition that composed the present administration there were some very important, if not essential, differences of opinion. Lord Shelburne, the pupil and friend of Lord Chatham, held the same high but unwise opinions, with respect to the recognition of American independence, which "the swan-like end" of that great man has consecrated in our imagination, however much our reason may condemn them. "Whenever," said Lord Shelburne, "the Parliament of Great Britain shall acknowledge the independence of America, from that moment the sun of England is set for ever." With regard to the affairs of India, too, and the punishment of those who were accused of mismanaging them, the views of the noble Lord wholly differed from those of Mr. Fox and his followers—as appeared from the decided part in favour of Mr. Hastings, which he took in the subsequent measure of the Impeachment. In addition to these fertile seeds of disunion, the retention in the cabinet of a person like Lord Thurlow, whose views of the Constitution were all through the wrong end of the telescope, and who did not even affect to conceal his hostility to the principles of his colleagues, seemed such a provision, at starting, for the embarrassment of the Ministry, as gave but very little hope of its union or stability.

The only Speech, of which any record remains, as having been delivered by Mr. Sheridan during his short official career, was upon a motion made by Mr. Eden, the late Secretary for Ireland, "to repeal so much of the Act of George I. as asserted a right in the King and Parliament of Great Britain, to make laws to bind the Kingdom of Ireland." This motion was intended to perplex the new ministers, who, it was evident from the speech of Mr. Fox on the subject, had not yet made up their minds to that surrender of the Legislative Supremacy of Great Britain, which Ireland now, with arms in her hands, demanded [1]. Mr. Sheridan concurred with the Honourable Secretary in deprecating such a hasty and insidious agitation of the question, but at the same time expressed, in a much more unhesitating manner, his opinion of that Law of Subjection from which Ireland now rose to release herself:—

[1] Mr. Fox, in his speech upon the Commercial Propositions of 1785, acknowledged the reluctance that was felt at this period, in surrendering the power of external or commercial legislation over Ireland:—"a power," he said, "which, in their struggles for independence, the Irish had imprudently insisted on having abolished, and which he had himself given up in compliance with the strong prejudices of that nation, though with a reluctance that nothing but irresistible necessity could have overcome."

"If he declared himself (he said) so decided an enemy to the principle of the Declaratory Law in question, which he had always regarded as a tyrannous usurpation in this country, he yet could not but reprobate the motives which influenced the present mover for its repeal—but, if the House divided on it, he should vote with him."

The general sense of the House being against the motion, it was withdrawn. But the spirit of the Irish nation had advanced too far on its march, to be called back even by the most friendly voice. All that now remained for the ministers was to yield, with a confiding frankness, what the rash measures of their predecessors and the weakness of England had put it out of their power with safety to refuse. This policy, so congenial to the disposition of Mr. Fox, was adopted. His momentary hesitation was succeeded by such a prompt and generous acquiescence in the full demands of the Irish Parliament, as gave all the grace of a favour to what necessity would, at all events, have extorted—and, in the spirited assertion of the rights of freemen on one side, and the cordial and entire recognition of them on the other, the names of Grattan and Fox, in that memorable moment, reflected a lustre on each other which associates them in its glory for ever.

Another occasion upon which Mr. Sheridan spoke while in office, —though no report of his Speech has been preserved—was a motion for a Committee to examine into the State of the Representation, brought forward by the youthful reformer, Mr. William Pitt, whose zeal in the cause of freedom was at that time, perhaps, sincere, and who little dreamed of the war he was destined to wage with it afterwards. Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan spoke strongly in favour of the motion, while, in compliance with the request of the former, Mr. Burke absented himself from the discussion—giving the cause of Reform, for once, a respite from the thunders of his eloquence, like the sleep of Jove in Homer, which leaves the Greeks for the moment masters of the field.[1]

> Σφιν κυδος οπαζε, μινυνθα περ, οφρ' ετι ευδει
> Ζευς.

Notwithstanding all this, however, the question was lost by a majority of 161 to 141.

Immediately on his accession to office, Mr. Sheridan received the following letter from his brother Charles Francis, who had been called to the Irish bar in 1778 or 9, but was at this time practising as a Special Pleader:—

"Dear Dick, *Dublin, March* 27, 1782.

"I am much obliged to you for your early intelligence concerning the

[1] "And, while the moment lasts of Jove's repose,
Make victory theirs." Cowper.

fate of the Ministry, and give you joy on the occasion, notwithstanding your sorrow for the departure of the good Opposition. I understand very well what you mean by this sorrow—but as you may be now in a situation in which you may obtain some substantial advantage for yourself, for God's sake improve the opportunity to the utmost, and don't let dreams of empty fame (of which you have had enough in conscience) carry you away from your solid interests.

"I return you many thanks for Fox's letter. I mean for your intention to make him write one—for as your good intentions always satisfy your conscience, and that you seem to think the carrying them into execution to be a mere trifling ceremony, as well omitted as not, your friends must always take the *will* for the *deed*. I will forgive you, however, on condition that you will for once in your life consider, that though the *will* alone may perfectly satisfy yourself, your friends would be a little more gratified if they were sometimes to see it accompanied by the deed – and let me be the first upon whom you try the experiment. If the people here are not to share the fate of their patrons, but are suffered to continue in the government of this country, I believe you will have it in your power, as I am certain it will be in your inclination, to fortify my claims upon them by recommendations from your side of the water, in such a manner as to insure to me what I have a right to expect from them, but of which I can have no certainty without that assistance. I wish the present people may continue here, because I certainly have claims upon them, and considering the footing that Lord C——and Charles Fox are on, a recommendation from the latter would now have every weight,—it would be drawing a bill upon Government here, payable at sight, which they dare not protest. So, dear Dick, I shall rely upon you that will *really* be done: and, to confess the truth, unless it be done and that speedily, I shall be completely ruined, for this damned annuity, payable to my uncle, plays the devil with me. If there is any intention of recalling the people here, I beg you will let me know it as soon as possible, that I may take my measures accordingly,—and I think I may rely upon you also that whoever comes over here as Lord L.——t, I shall not be forgot among the number of those who shall be recommended to them.

"As to our politics here, I send you a newspaper, read the resolutions of the volunteers, and you will be enabled to form some idea of the spirit which at present pervades this country. A declaration of the independency of our Parliament upon yours will *certainly* pass our House of Commons immediately after the recess; government here dare not, cannot oppose it; you will see the volunteers have pledged their lives and fortunes in support of the measure. The grand juries of every county have followed their example, and some of the staunchest friends of government have been, much against their inclinations, compelled to sign the most spirited Resolutions.

"A call of the House is ordered for the first Tuesday after the recess, and circular letters from the Speaker worded in this remarkable manner, "that the members do attend on that day as *they tender the rights of Ireland.*" In short, nothing will satisfy the people but the most unequivocal assertion of the total independence of the Irish legislature. This flame has been raised within this six weeks, and is entirely owing either

to the insidious design or unpardonable inattention of the late administration, in including, or suffering to be included, the name of Ireland in no less than five British statutes passed last sessions. People here were ignorant of this till Grattan produced the five Acts to the House of Commons, one of which Eden had been so imprudent as to publish in the Dublin Gazette. Previous to this the general sense of the country was, that the mere question of right should be suffered to sleep, provided the *exercise* of the power claimed under it should never again be resorted to in a single instance.

The sooner you repeal the 6th of G. I, the better; for, believe me, nothing short of that can now preserve union and cordiality between the two countries.

I hope my father and you are very good friends by this. I shall not be able to send you the remaining 50*l.* till October, as I have been disappointed as to the time of payment of the money I expected to receive this month.—Let me entreat you to write to me shortly a few words. I beg my love to Mrs. S. and Tom.

"I am, dear Dick,

"Your very affectionate brother,

"C. F. Sheridan."

The expectations of the writer of this letter were not disappointed. The influence of Mr. Sheridan, added to his own claims, procured for him the office of Secretary of War in Ireland,—a situation, which the greater pliancy of his political principles contrived to render a more permanent benefit to him than any that his Whig brother was ever able to secure for himself.

The death of the Marquis of Rockingham broke up this short-lived Ministry, which, during the four months of its existence, did more perhaps for the principles of the Constitution, than any one administration that England had seen since the Revolution. They were betrayed, it is true, into a few awkward overflowings of loyalty, which the rare access of Whigs to the throne may at once account for and excuse:—and Burke, in particular, has left us a specimen of his taste for extremes, in that burst of optimism with which he described the King's message, as "the best of messages to the best of people from the best of kings." But these first effects of the atmosphere of a court, upon heads unaccustomed to it, are natural and harmless—while the measures that passed during that brief interval, directed against the sources of Parliamentary corruption, and confirmatory of the best principles of the Constitution must ever be remembered to the honour of the party from which they emanated. The exclusion of contractors from the House of Commons—the disqualifications of revenue-officers from voting at elections—the disfranchisement of corrupt voters at Cricklade, by

which a second precedent [1] was furnished towards that plan of gradual Reform, which has, in our own time, been so forcibly recommended by Lord John Russel—the diminution of the patronage of the Crown, by Mr. Burke's celebrated Bill [2]—the return to the old constitutional practice [3] of making the revenues of the Crown pay off their own incumbrances, which salutary principle was again lost in the hands of Mr. Pitt—the atonement at last made to the violated rights of electors, by the rescinding of the Resolutions relative to Wilkes—the frank and cordial understanding entered into with Ireland, which identifies the memory of Mr. Fox and this ministry with the only *oasis* in the whole desert of Irish history—so many and such important recognitions of the best principles of Whiggism, followed up, as they were, by the Resolutions of Lord John Cavendish at the close of the Session, pledging the ministers to a perseverance in the same task of purification and retrenchment, give an aspect to this short period of the annals of the late reign, to which the eye turns for relief from the arbitrary complexion of the rest; and furnish us with, at least, *one* consoling instance, where the principles professed by statesmen when in opposition, were retained and sincerely acted upon by them in power.

On the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, Lord Shelburne, without, as it appears, consulting any of the persons attached to that nobleman, accepted the office of first Lord of the Treasury; in consequence of which Mr. Fox, and the greater number of his friends—among whom were Mr. Burke and Mr. Sheridan—sent in their resignations; while General Conway, the Duke of Richmond, and one or two other old allies of the party, remained in office.

To a disposition so social as that of Mr. Fox, the frequent interruption and even loss of friendships, which he had to sustain in the course of his political career, must have been a sad alloy to its pleasure and its pride. The fable of the sheep that leaves its fleece on the bramble bush is but too apt an illustration of the fate of him, who thus sees himself stripped of the comforts of friendship by the tenacious and thorny hold of politics. On the present occasion, however, the desertion of his standard by a few who had followed him cordially in his ascent to power, but did not show the same alacrity in accompanying his voluntary fall, was amply made up to him by the ready devotion, with which the rest of the party shared his for-

[1] The first was that of the borough of Shoreham in 1771.

[2] This Bill, though its circle of retrenchment was, as might be expected, considerably narrowed, when the Treasury Bench became the centre from which he described it, was yet eminently useful, as an acknowledgment from ministerial authority of the necessity of such occasional curtailments of the Royal influence.

[3] First departed from in 1769. See Burke's powerful exposure of the mischiefs of this innovation, in his "Thoughts on the Causes of the present Discontents."

tunes. The disinterestedness of Sheridan was the more meritorious, if, as there is every reason to believe, he considered the step of resignation at such a moment to be, at least, hasty, if not wholly wrong. In this light it was, indeed, viewed by many judicious persons at the time, and the assurances given by the Duke of Richmond and General Conway, of the continued adherence of the cabinet to the same principles and measures, to which they were pledged at the first formation of the ministry, would seem to confirm the justice of the opinion. So much temper, however, had, during the few months of their union, been fermenting between the two great masses of which the administration was composed, that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Rockingham party to rally, with any cordiality, round Lord Shelburne, as a leader—however they might still have been contented to co-operate with him, had he remained in the humble station which he himself had originally selected. That noble Lord, too, who felt that the sacrifice which he had considerately made, in giving up the supremacy of station to Lord Rockingham, had, so far from being duly appreciated by his colleagues, been repaid only with increased alienation and distrust, could hardly be expected to make a second surrender of his advantages, in favour of persons who had, he thought, so ungraciously requited him for the first. In the mean time the Court, to which the Rockingham party was odious, had, with its usual policy, hollowed the ground beneath them, so as to render their footing neither agreeable nor safe. The favourite object in that quarter being to compose a ministry of those convenient ingredients, called "King's friends," Lord Shelburne was but made use of as a temporary instrument, to clear away, in the first place, the chief obstacles to such an arrangement, and then, in his turn, be sacrificed himself as soon as a more subservient system could be organised. It was, indeed, only upon a strong representation from his Lordship of the impossibility of carrying on his government against such an Opposition, without the infusion of fresh and popular talent, that the royal consent was obtained to the appointment of Mr. Pitt—the memory of whose uncompromising father, as well as the first achievements on his own youthful shield, rendered him no very promising accession to such a scheme of government, as was evidently then contemplated by the Court.

In this state of affairs, the resignation of Mr. Fox and his friends was but a prompt and spirited anticipation of what must inevitably have taken place, under circumstances much less redounding to the credit of their independence and disinterestedness. There is little doubt, indeed, that with the great majority of the nation, Mr. Fox by this step considerably added to his popularity—and, if we were

desired to point out the meridian moment of his fame, we should fix it perhaps at this splendid epoch, before the ill-fated Coalition had damped the confidence of his friends, or the ascendancy of his great rival had multiplied the number of his enemies.

There is an anecdote of Mr. Burke, connected with this period, the credibility of which must be left to the reader's own judgment. It is said that, immediately upon the retirement of Mr. Fox, while Lord John Cavendish (whose resignation was for a short time delayed by the despatch of some official business), was still a minister, Mr. Burke, with a retrospect to the sweets of office which showed that he had not wholly left hope behind, endeavoured to open a negotiation through the medium of Lord John, for the purpose of procuring, by some arrangement, either for himself or his son, a Tellership then in the possession of a relative of Lord Orford. It is but fair to add, that this curious anecdote rests chiefly upon the authority of the latter nobleman [1]. The degree of faith it receives will, therefore, depend upon the balance that may be struck in our comparative estimate between the disinterestedness of Burke and the veracity of Lord Orford.

At the commencement of the following session that extraordinary Coalition was declared, which had the ill-luck attributed to the conjunction of certain planets, and has shed an unfavourable influence over the political world ever since. Little is, I believe, known of the private negotiations that led to this ill-assorted union of parties; but, from whichever side the first advances may have come, the affair seems to have been despatched with the rapidity of a Siamese courtship; and while to Mr. Eden (afterwards Lord Auckland) is attributed the credit of having gained Lord North's consent to the union, Mr. Burke is generally supposed to have been the person who sung the "Hymen, oh Hymenæe," in the ears of Mr. Fox.

With that sagacity, which in general directed his political views, Mr. Sheridan foresaw all the consequences of such a defiance of public opinion, and exerted, it is said, the whole power of his persuasion and reasoning, to turn aside his sanguine and uncalculating friend from a measure so likely to embarrass his future career. Unfortunately, however, the advice was not taken,—and a person, who witnessed the close of a conversation, in which Sheridan had been making a last effort to convince Mr. Fox of the imprudence of the step he was about to take, heard the latter, at parting, express his final resolution in the following decisive words: — "It is as fixed as the Hanover succession."

To the general principle of Coalitions, and the expediency and

[1] Unpublished Papers.

even duty of forming them, in conjunctures that require and justify such a sacrifice of the distinctions of party, no objection, it appears to me, can rationally be made by those who are satisfied with the manner in which the Constitution has worked, since the new modification of its machinery introduced at the Revolution. The Revolution itself was, indeed, brought about by a Coalition, in which Tories, surrendering their doctrines of submission, arrayed themselves by the side of Whigs, in defence of their common liberties. Another Coalition, less important in its object and effects, but still attended with results most glorious to the country, was that which took place in the year 1757, when, by a union of parties from whose dissension much mischief had flowed, the interests of both king and people were reconciled, and the good genius of England triumphed at home and abroad.

On occasions like these, when the public liberty or safety is in peril, it is the duty of every honest statesman to say, with the Roman, "*Non me impedient privatæ offensiones, quo minus pro reipublicæ, salute etiam cum inimicissimo consentiam.*" Such cases, however, but rarely occur; and they have been in this respect, among others, distinguished from the ordinary occasions, on which the ambition or selfishness of politicians resorts to such unions, that the voice of the people has called aloud for them in the name of the public weal: and that the cause round which they have rallied has been sufficiently general, to merge all party titles in the one undistinguishing name of Englishman. By neither of these tests can the junction between Lord North and Mr. Fox be justified. The people at large, so far from calling for this ill-omened alliance, would on the contrary—to use the language of Mr. Pitt—have "forbid the banns;" and, though it is unfair to suppose that the interests of the public did not enter into the calculations of the united leaders, yet, if the real watchword of their union were to be demanded of them in "the Palace of Truth," there can be little doubt that the answer of each would be, distinctly and unhesitatingly, "Ambition."

One of the most specious allegations in defence of the measure is, that the extraordinary favour which Lord Shelburne enjoyed at court, and the arbitrary tendencies known to prevail in that quarter, portended just then such an overflow of Royal influence, as it was necessary to counteract by this double embankment of party. In the first place, however, it is by no means so certain that the noble minister at this period did actually enjoy such favour. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that his possession of the Royal confidence did not long survive that important service, to which he was made instrumental, of clearing the cabinet of the Whigs; and that, like the bees of Virgil, he had left the soul of his own power in

the wound which he had been the means of inflicting upon that of others. In the second place, whatever might have been the designs of the Court,—and of its encroaching spirit no doubt can be entertained,—Lord Shelburne had assuredly given no grounds for apprehending, that he would ever, like one of the chiefs of this combination against him, be brought to lend himself precipitately or mischievously to its views. Though differing from Mr. Fox on some important points of policy, and following the example of his friend, Lord Chatham, in keeping himself independent of Whig confederacies, he was not the less attached to the true principles of that party, and, throughout his whole political career, invariably maintained them. This argument, therefore,—the only plausible one in defence of the Coalition,—fails in the two chief assumptions on which it is founded.

It has been truly said of Coalitions, considered abstractedly, that such a union of parties, when the public good requires it, is to be justified on the same grounds on which party itself is vindicated. But the more we feel inclined to acknowledge the utility of party, the more we must dread and deprecate any unnecessary compromise, by which a suspicion of unsoundness may be brought upon the agency of so useful a principle—the more we should discourage, as a matter of policy, any facility in surrendering those badges of opinion, on which the eyes of followers are fondly fixed, and by which their confidence and spirit are chiefly kept alive—the more, too, we must lament that a great popular leader, like Mr. Fox, should ever have lightly concurred in such a confusion of the boundaries of opinion, and, like that mighty river, the Mississippi, whose waters lose their own colour in mixing with those of the Missouri, have sacrificed the distinctive hue of his own political creed, to this confluence of interests with a party so totally opposed to it.

"Court and country," says Hume [1], "which are the genuine offspring of the British government, are a kind of mixed parties, and are influenced both by principle and by interest. The heads of the factions are commonly most governed by the latter motive; the inferior members of them by the former." Whether this be altogether true or not, it will, at least, without much difficulty, be conceded, that the lower we descend in the atmosphere of party, the more quick and inflammable we find the feeling that circulates through it. Accordingly, actions and professions, which, in that region of indifference, high life, may be forgotten as soon as done or uttered, become recorded as pledges and standards of conduct, among the lower and more earnest adherents of the cause; and many a question,

[1] Essay "on the Parties of Great Britain."

that has ceased to furnish even a jest in the drawing-rooms of the great, may be still agitated, as of vital importance, among the humbler and less initiated disputants of the party. Such being the tenacious nature of partisanship, and such the watch kept upon every movement of the higher political bodies, we can well imagine what a portent it must appear to distant and unprepared observers, when the stars to which they trusted for guidance are seen to "shoot madly from their spheres," and not only lose themselves for the time in another system, but unsettle all calculations with respect to their movements for the future.

The steps by which, in general, the principals in such transactions are gradually reconciled to their own inconsistency—the negotiations that precede and soften down the most salient difficulties—the value of the advantages gained, in return for opinions sacrificed—the new points of contact brought out by a change of circumstances, and the abatement or extinction of former differences, by the remission or removal of the causes that provoked them,—all these conciliatory gradations and balancing adjustments, which to those who are in the secret may account for, and more or less justify, the alliance of statesmen who differ in their general views of politics, are with difficulty, if at all, to be explained to the remote multitude of the party, whose habit it is to judge and feel in the gross, and who, as in the case of Lord North and Mr. Fox, can see only the broad and but too intelligible fact, that the leaders for whom both parties had sacrificed so much—those on one side their interest, and those on the other, perhaps, their consciences—had deserted them to patch up a suspicious alliance with each other, the only open and visible motive to which was the spoil that it enabled them to partition between them.

If, indeed, in that barter of opinions and interests, which must necessarily take place in Coalitions between the partisans of the People and of the Throne, the former had any thing like an equality of chance, the mere probability of gaining thus any concessions in favour of freedom might justify to sanguine minds the occasional risk of the compromise. But it is evident that the result of such bargains must generally be to the advantage of the Crown—the alluvions of power all naturally tend towards that shore. Besides, where there are places as well as principles to be surrendered on one side, there must in return be so much more of principles given up on the other, as will constitute an equivalent to this double sacrifice. The centre of gravity will be sure to lie in that body which contains within it the source of emoluments and honours, and the other will be forced to revolve implicitly round it.

The only occasion at this period on which Mr. Sheridan seems to

have alluded to the Coalition, was during a speech of some length on the consideration of the Preliminary Articles of Peace. Finding himself obliged to advert to the subject, he chose rather to recriminate on the opposite party for the anomaly of their own alliances, than to vindicate that which his distinguished friend had just formed, and which, in his heart, as has been already stated, he wholly disapproved. The inconsistency of the Tory Lord Advocate (Dundas) in connecting himself with the patron of Equal Representation, Mr. Pitt, and his support of that full recognition of American independence, against which, under the banners of Lord North, he had so obstinately combated, afforded to Sheridan's powers of raillery an opportunity of display, of which, there is no doubt, he with his accustomed felicity availed himself. The reporter of the speech, however, has, as usual, contrived, with an art near akin to that of reducing diamonds to charcoal: to turn all the brilliancy of his wit into dull and opake verbiage.

It was during this same debate, that he produced that happy retort upon Mr. Pitt, which, for good-humoured point and seasonableness, has seldom, if ever, been equalled.

"Mr. Pitt (say the Parliamentary Reports) was pointedly severe on the gentlemen who had spoken against the Address, and particularly on Mr. Sheridan. 'No man admired more than he did the abilities of that Right Honourable Gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns and his epigrammatic point; and if they were reserved for the proper stage, they would, no doubt, receive, what the Honourable Gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience; and it would be his fortune '*sui plausu gaudere theatri.*' But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of those elegancies.' Mr. Sheridan, in rising to explain, said that 'On the particular sort of personality which the Right Honourable Gentleman had thought proper to make use of, he need not make any comment. The propriety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it, must have been obvious to the House. But, said Mr. Sheridan, let me assure the Right Honourable Gentleman, that I do now, and will at any time he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good-humour Nay, I will say more—flattered and encouraged by the Right Honourable Gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if ever I again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption—to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the character of the Angry Boy in the Alchymist.'"

Mr. Sheridan's connection with the stage, though one of the most permanent sources of his glory, was also a point, upon which, at the commencement of his political career, his pride was most easily awakened and alarmed. He, himself, used to tell of the frequent mortifications which he had suffered, when at school, from

taunting allusions to his father's profession—being called by some of his school-fellows "the player-boy," etc. Mr. Pitt had therefore selected the most sensitive spot for his sarcasm; and the good temper as well as keenness, with which the thrust was returned, must have been felt even through all that pride of youth and talent, in which the new Chancellor of the Exchequer was then enveloped. There could hardly, indeed, have been a much greater service rendered to a person in the situation of Mr. Sheridan, than thus affording him an opportunity of silencing, once for all, a battery to which this weak point of his pride was exposed, and by which he might otherwise have been kept in continual alarm. This gentleman-like retort, combined with the recollection of his duel, tended to place him for the future in perfect security against any indiscreet tamperings with his personal history [1].

In the administration, that was now forced upon the court by the Coalition, Mr. Sheridan held the office of Secretary of the Treasury—the other Secretary being Mr. Richard Burke, the brother of the orator. His exertions in the House, while he held this office, were chiefly confined to financial subjects, for which he, perhaps, at this time, acquired the taste, that tempted him afterwards, upon most occasions, to bring his arithmetic into the field against Mr. Pitt. His defence of the Receipt Tax,—which, like all other long-lived taxes, was born with difficulty,—appears, as far as we can judge of it from the Report, to have been highly amusing. Some country-gentleman having recommended a tax upon grave-stones as a substitute for it, Sheridan replied that

[1] The following *jeu d'esprit*, written by Sheridan himself, upon this occurrence, has been found among his manuscripts:

"Advertisement Extraordinary.

"We hear that, in consequence of a hint, lately given in the House of Commons, the Play of the Alchymist is certainly to be performed by a set of Gentlemen for our diversion, in a private apartment of Buckingham House.

"The Characters, thus described in the old editions of Ben Jonson, are to be represented in the following manner—the old practice of men's playing the female parts being adopted:—

"Subtle (*the Alchymist*).....	Lord Sh—lb—e.
Face (*the House-keeper*).....	The Lord Ch—ll—or.
Doll Common (*their Colleague*)...	The L—d Adv—c—te.
Drugger (*a Tobacco-man*).....	Lord Eff—ng—m.
Epicure Mammon.....	Mr. R—gby.
Tribulation.....	Dr J—nk—s—n.
Ananias (*a little Pastor*).....	Mr. H—ll.
Kastrill (*the Angry Boy*).....	Mr. W. P—tt.
Dame Pliant.....	Gen. C—nw—y.
and	
Surly.....	His ——.'

"Such a tax, indeed, was not easily evaded, and could not be deemed oppressive, as it would only be once paid; but so great was the spirit of clamour against any tax on receipts, that he should not wonder if it extended to them; and that it should be asserted, that persons having paid the last debt,—the debt of nature,—government had resolved they should pay a receipt-tax, and have it stamped over their grave. Nay, with so extraordinary a degree of inveteracy were some Committees in the city, and elsewhere, actuated, that if a receipt-tax of the nature in question was enacted, he should not be greatly surprised if it were soon after published, that such Committees had unanimously resolved that they would never be buried, in order to avoid paying the tax; but had determined to lie above ground, or have their ashes consigned to family-urns, in the manner of the ancients."

He also took an active share in the discussions relative to the restoration of Powell and Bembridge to their office by Mr. Burke:—a transaction which, without fixing any direct stigma upon that eminent man, subjected him, at least, to the unlucky suspicion of being less scrupulous in his notions of official purity, than became the party which he espoused or the principles of Reform that he inculcated.

Little as the Court was disposed, during the late reign, to retain Whigs in its service any longer than was absolutely necessary, it must be owned that neither did the latter, in general, take very courtier-like modes of continuing their connection with Royalty; but rather chose to meet the hostility of the Crown halfway, by some overt act of imprudence or courage, which at once brought the matter to an issue between them. Of this hardihood the India Bill of Mr. Fox was a remarkable example—and he was himself fully aware of the risk which he ran in proposing it. "He knew," he said, in his speech upon first bringing forward the question, "that the task he had that day set himself was extremely arduous and difficult; he knew that he had considerable risk in it; but when he took upon himself an office of responsibility, he had made up his mind to the situation and the danger of it."

Without agreeing with those who impute to Mr. Fox the extravagant design of investing himself, by means of this Bill, with a sort of perpetual Whig Dictatorship, independent of the will of the Crown, it must nevertheless be allowed that, together with the interests of India, which were the main object of this decisive measure, the future interest and influence of his own party were in no small degree provided for; and that a foundation was laid by it for their attainment of a more steady footing in power than, from the indisposition of the Court towards them, they had yet been able to accomplish. Regarding—as he well might, after so long an experience of Tory misrule—a government upon Whig principles as essential

to the true interests of England, and hopeless of seeing the experiment at all fairly tried, as long as the political existence of the servants of the Crown was left dependent upon the caprice or treachery of their master, he would naturally welcome such an accession to the influence of the party, as might strengthen their claims to power when out of office, and render their possession of it, when in, more secure and useful. These objects the Bill in question would have, no doubt, effected. By turning the Pactolus of Indian patronage into the territories of Whiggism, it would have attracted new swarms of settlers to that region—the Court would have found itself outbid in the market,—and, however the principles of the party might eventually have fared, the party itself would have been so far triumphant. It was indeed, probably, the despair of ever obtaining admission for Whiggism, in its unalloyed state, into the councils of the sovereign, that reconciled Mr. Fox to the rash step of debasing it down to the Court standard by the Coalition—and, having once gained possession of power by these means, he saw, in the splendid provisions of the India Bill, a chance of being able to transmit it as an heir-loom to his party, which, though conscious of the hazard, he was determined to try. If his intention, therefore, was, as his enemies say, to establish a Dictatorship in his own person, it was, at the worst, such a Dictatorship as the Romans sometimes created, for the purpose of averting the plague—and would have been directed merely against that pestilence of Toryism, under which the prosperity of England had, he thought, languished so long.

It was hardly, however, to be expected of Royalty,—even after the double humiliation which it had suffered, in being vanquished by rebels under one branch of the Coalition, and brow-beaten into acknowledging their independence by the other—that it would tamely submit to such an undisguised invasion of its sanctuary; particularly when the intruders had contrived their operations so ill, as to array the people in hostility against them, as well as the Throne. Never was there an outcry against a ministry so general and decisive. Dismissed insultingly by the King on one side, they had to encounter the indignation of the people on the other; and, though the House of Commons, with a fidelity to fallen ministers sufficiently rare, stood by them for a time in a desperate struggle with their successors, the voice of the Royal Prerogative, like the horn of Astolpho, soon scattered the whole body in consternation among their constituents, "*di quà, di là, di su, di giù*," and the result was a complete and long-enjoyed triumph to the Throne and Mr. Pitt.

Though the name of Mr. Fox is indissolubly connected with this Bill, and though he bore it aloft, as fondly as Cæsar did his own

Commentaries, through all this troubled sea of opposition, it is to Mr. Burke that the first daring outline of the plan, as well as the chief materials for filling it up, are to be attributed,—whilst to Sir Arthur Pigot's able hand was entrusted the legal task of drawing the Bill. The intense interest which Burke took in the affairs of India had led him to lay in such stores of information on the subject, as naturally gave him the lead in all deliberations connected with it. His labours for the Select Committee, the Ninth Report of which is pregnant with his mighty mind, may be considered as the source and foundation of this Bill—while of the under-plot, which had in view the strengthening of the Whig interest, we find the germ in his "Thoughts on the present Discontents," where, in pointing out the advantage to England of being ruled by such a confederacy, he says, "in one of the most fortunate periods of our history, this country was governed by a connection; I mean the great connection of Whigs in the reign of Queen Anne."

Burke was, indeed, at this time the actuating spirit of the party —as he must have been of any party to which he attached himself. Keeping, as he did, the double engines of his genius and his industry incessantly in play over the minds of his more indolent colleagues, with an intentness of purpose that nothing could divert, and an impetuosity of temper that nothing could resist, it is not wonderful that he should have gained such an entire mastery over their wills, or that the party who obeyed him should so long have exhibited the mark of his rash spirit imprinted upon their measures. The yielding temper of Mr. Fox, together with his unbounded admiration of Burke led him easily, in the first instance, to acquiesce in the views of his friend, and then the ardour of his own nature, and the self-kindling power of his eloquence, threw an earnestness and fire into his public enforcement of those views, which made even himself forget that they were but adopted from another, and impressed upon his hearers the conviction that they were all, and from the first, his own.

We read his speeches in defence of the India Bill with a sort of breathless anxiety, which no other political discourses, except those, perhaps, of Demosthenes, could produce. The importance of the stake which he risks—the boldness of his plan—the gallantry with which he flings himself into the struggle, and the frankness of personal feeling that breathes throughout—all throw around him an interest, like that which encircles a hero of romance; nor could the most candid autobiography that ever was written exhibit the whole character of the man more transparently through it.

The death of this ill-fated Ministry was worthy of its birth. Originating in a Coalition of Whigs and Tories, which compromised

the *principles* of freedom, it was destroyed by a Coalition of King and People, which is even, perhaps, more dangerous to its *practice* [1]. The conduct, indeed, of all estates and parties, during this short interval, was any thing but laudable. The leaven of the unlucky alliance with Lord North was but too visible in many of the measures of the Ministry—in the jobbing terms of the loan, the resistance to Mr. Pitt's plan of retrenchment, and the diminished numbers on the side of Parliamentary Reform [2]. On the other hand, Mr. Pitt and his party, in their eagerness for place, did not hesitate to avail themselves of the ambidexterous and unworthy trick of representing the India Bill to the people, as a Tory plan for the increase of Royal influence, and to the King, as a Whig conspiracy for the curtailment of it. The King, himself, in his arbitrary interference with the deliberations of the Lords, and the Lords, in the prompt servility with which so many of them obeyed his bidding, gave specimens of their respective branches of the Constitution, by no means creditable—while, finally, the people, by the unanimous outcry with which they rose, in defence of the monopoly of Leadenhall Street and the sovereign will of the Court, proved how little of the "*vox Dei*" there may sometimes be in such clamour.

Mr. Sheridan seems to have spoken but once during the discussions on the India Bill, and that was on the third reading, when it was carried so triumphantly through the House of Commons. The report of his speech is introduced with the usual tantalising epithets, "witty," "entertaining," etc. etc.; but, as usual, entails disappointment in the perusal—"*at cum intraveris, Dii Deæque, quam nihil in medio invenies!*[3]" There is only one of the announced

[1] "This assumption (says Burke) of the Tribunitian power by the Sovereign was truly alarming. When Augustus Cæsar modestly consented to become the Tribune of the people, Rome gave up into the hands of that prince the only remaining shield she had to protect her liberty. The Tribunitian power in this country, as in ancient Rome, was wisely kept distinct and separate from the executive power: in this government it was constitutionally lodged, where it was naturally to be lodged, in the House of Commons; and to that House the people ought first to carry their complaints, even when they were directed against the measures of the House itself: but now the people were taught to pass by the door of the House of Commons, and supplicate the throne for the protection of their liberties."—*Speech on moving his Representation to the King, in June,* 1784.

[2] The consequences of this alloy were still more visible in Ireland. "The Coalition Ministry," says Mr. Hardy, "displayed itself in various employments—but there was no harmony. The old courtiers hated the new, and being more dexterous, were more successful." In stating that Lord Charlemont was but coldly received by the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Northington, Mr. Hardy adds, "It is to be presumed that some of the old Court, who, in consequence of the Coalition, had crept once more into favour, influenced his conduct in this particular."

[3] Pliny.

pleasantries forth-coming, in any shape, through the speech. Mr. Scott (the present Lord Eldon) had, in the course of the debate, indulged in a licence of Scriptural parody, which he would himself, no doubt, be among the first to stigmatise as blasphemy in others, and had affected to discover the rudiments of the India Bill in a Chapter of the Book of Revelations,—Babylon being the East India Company, Mr. Fox and his seven Commissioners the Beast with the seven heads, and the marks on the hand and forehead, imprinted by the Beast upon those around him, meaning, evidently, he said, the peerages, pensions, and places distributed by the minister. In answering this strange sally of forensic wit, Mr. Sheridan quoted other passages from the same Sacred Book, which (as the Reporter gravely assures us) "told strongly for the Bill," and which proved that Lord Fitzwilliam and his fellow-commissioners, instead of being the seven heads of the Beast, were seven Angels clothed in pure and white linen!"

CHAPTER IX.

The Prince of Wales.—Financial Measures.—Mr. Pitt's East India Bill.—Re-elected for Stafford.—Irish commercial Propositions.—Plan of the Duke of Richmond.—Sinking Fund.

THE Whigs, who had now every reason to be convinced of the aversion with which they were regarded at court, had lately been, in some degree, compensated for this misfortune by the accession to their party of the Heir Apparent, who had, since the year 1783, been in the enjoyment of a separate establishment, and taken his seat in the House of Peers as Duke of Cornwall. That a young prince, fond of pleasure and impatient of restraint, should have thrown himself into the arms of those who were most likely to be indulgent to his errors, is nothing surprising, either in politics or ethics. But that mature and enlightened statesmen, with the lessons of all history before their eyes, should have been equally ready to embrace such a rash alliance, or should count upon it as any more than a temporary instrument of faction, is, to say the least of it, one of those self-delusions of the wise, which show how vainly the voice of the Past may speak amid the loud appeals and temptations of the Present. The last Prince of Wales, it is true, by whom the popular cause was espoused, had left the lesson imperfect, by dying before he came to the throne. But this deficiency has since been amply made up; and future Whigs, who may be placed in similar circumstances, will have, at least, one historical warning before their eyes, which ought to be enough to satisfy the most unreflecting and credulous.

In some points, the breach that now took place between the Prince and the King, bore a close resemblance to that which had

disturbed the preceding reign. In both cases, the Royal parents were harsh and obstinate—in both cases, money was the chief source of dissension—and in both cases, the genius, wit, and accomplishments of those with whom the Heir Apparent connected himself, threw a splendour round the political bond between them, which prevented even themselves from perceiving its looseness and fragility.

In the late question of Mr. Fox's India Bill, the Prince of Wales had voted with his political friends in the first division. But, upon finding afterwards that the King was hostile to the measure, his Royal Highness took the prudent step (and with Mr. Fox's full concurrence) of absenting himself entirely from the second discussion, when the Bill, as it is known, was finally defeated. This circumstance, occurring thus early in their intercourse, might have proved to each of the parties in this ill-sorted alliance, how difficult it was for them to remain long and creditably united[1]. On the one side, there was a character to be maintained with the people, which a too complacent toleration of the errors of royalty might,—and, as it happened,—*did* compromise; while, on the other side, there were the obligations of filial duty, which, as in this instance of the India Bill, made desertion decorous, at a time when co-operation would have been most friendly and desirable. There was also the perpetual consciousness of being destined to a higher station, in which, while duty would perhaps demand an independence of all party whatever,

[1] The following sensible remarks upon this first interruption of the political connection between the Heir Apparent and the Opposition, are from an unfinished Life of Mr. Sheridan now in my possession—written by one whose boyhood was passed in the society of the great men whom he undertook to commemorate, and whose station and talents would have given to such a work an authenticity and value, that would have rendered the humble memorial, which I have attempted, unnecessary:

"His Royal Highness acted upon this occasion by Mr. Fox's advice, and with perfect propriety. At the same time the necessity under which he found himself of so acting, may serve as a general warning to Princes of the Blood in this country, to abstain from connecting themselves with party, and engaging either as active supporters or opponents of the administration of the day. The ties of family, the obligations of their situation, the feelings of the public, assuredly will condemn them, at some time or other, as in the present instance, to desert their own public acts, to fail in their private professions, and to leave their friends at the very moment in which service and support are the most imperiously required.

"Princes are always suspected proselytes to the popular side. Conscious of this suspicion, they strive to do it away by exaggerated professions, and by bringing to the party which they espouse more violent opinions and more unmeasured language than any which they find. These mighty promises they soon find it unreasonable, impossible, inconvenient to fulfil. Their dereliction of their principles becomes manifest and indefensible, in proportion to the vehemence with which they have pledged themselves always to maintain them; and the contempt and indignation which accompanies their retreat is equivalent to the expectations excited by the boldness and determination of their advance."

convenience would certainly dictate a release from the restraints of Whiggism.

It was most fortunate for Mr. Sheridan, on the rout of his party that ensued, to find himself safe in his seat for Stafford once more, and the following document, connected with his election, is sufficiently curious, in more respects than one, to be laid before the reader:—

R. B. Sheridan, Esq. Expenses at the Borough of Stafford for Election, Anno 1784.

248 Burgesses, paid *L.* 5 5 0 each.					*L.* 1,302 0 0
Yearly Expenses since.					
		L.	*s.*	*d.*	
House-rent and taxes		23	6	6	
Servant at 6*s.* per week, board wages.		15	12	0	
Ditto, yearly wages.		8	8	0	
Coals, etc.		10	0	0	
				57 6 6	
Expenses for Election—continued.					
Brought forward.			*L.*	57 6 6	1,302 0 0
Ale tickets.	*L.* 40 0 0				
Half the members' plate.	25 0 0				
Swearing young burgesses.	10 0 0				
Subscription to the Infirmary. . . .	5 5 0				
Ditto clergymen's widows.	2 2 0				
Ringers.	4 4 0				
				86 11 0	
One year.				143 17 6	
Multiplied by years				6	
					863 5 0
Total expense of six years' parliament, exclusive of expense incurred during the time of election, and your own annual expenses.					*L.* 2,165 5 0

The followers of the Coalition had been defeated in almost all directions, and it was computed that no less than 160 of them had been left upon the field,—with no other consolation than what their own wit afforded them, in the title which they bestowed upon themselves of "Fox's Martyrs."

This reduction in the ranks of his enemies, at the very commencement of his career, left an open space for the youthful minister, which was most favourable to the free display of his energies. He had, indeed, been indebted, throughout the whole struggle, full as much to a lucky concurrence of circumstances as to his talents and name for the supremacy to which he so rapidly rose. All the

other eminent persons of the day had either deeply entangled themselves in party ties, or taken the gloss off their reputations by some unsuccessful or unpopular measures; and as he was the only man independent enough of the House of Commons to be employed by the King as a weapon against it, so was he the only one sufficiently untried in public life, to be able to draw unlimitedly on the confidence of the people, and array them, as he did, in all the enthusiasm of ignorance, on his side. Without these two advantages, which he owed to his youth and inexperience, even loftier talents than his would have fallen far short of his triumph.

The financial affairs of the country, which the war had considerably deranged, and which none of the ministries that ensued felt sure enough of themselves to attend to, were, of course, among the first and most anxious objects of his administration; and the wisdom of the measures which he brought forward for their amelioration was not only candidly acknowledged by his opponents at the time, but forms at present the least disputable ground upon which his claim to reputation as a finance-minister rests. Having found, on his accession to power, an annual deficiency of several millions in the revenue, he, in the course of two years, raised the income of the country so high as to afford a surplus for the establishment of his Sinking Fund. Nor did his merit lie only in the mere increase of income, but in the generally sound principles of the taxation by which he accomplished it, in the improvements introduced into the collection of the revenue, and the reform effected in the offices connected with it, by the simplification of the mode of keeping public accounts.

Though Mr. Sheridan delivered his opinion upon many of the taxes proposed, his objections were rather to the details than the general object of the measures; and it may be reckoned, indeed, a part of the good fortune of the minister, that the financial department of Opposition at this time was not assumed by any more adventurous calculator, who might have perplexed him, at least, by ingenious cavils, however he might have failed to defeat him by argument. As it was, he had the field almost entirely to himself, for Sheridan, though acute, was not industrious enough to be formidable, and Mr. Fox, from a struggle, perhaps, between candour and party-feeling, absented himself almost entirely from the discussion of the new taxes [1].

[1] "He had absented himself," he said, "upon principle, that, though he might not be able to approve of the measures which had been adopted, he did not at the same time think himself authorised to condemn them, or to give them opposition, unless he had been ready to suggest others less distressing to the subject."—*Speech on Navy Bills*, etc. etc

The only question, in which the angry spirit of the late conflict still survived, were the Westminster Scrutiny and Mr. Pitt's East India Bill. The conduct of the minister in the former transaction showed that his victory had not brought with it those generous feelings towards the vanquished, which, in the higher order of minds, follows as naturally as the calm after a tempest. There must, indeed, have been something peculiarly harsh and unjust in the proceedings against his great rival on this occasion, which could induce so many of the friends of the minister—then in the fulness of his popularity and power—to leave him in a minority, and vote against the continuance of the Scrutiny. To this persecution, however, we are indebted for a speech of Mr. Fox, which is (as he, himself, in his opening, pronounced it *would* be) one of his best and noblest; and which is reported, too, with such evident fidelity, as well as spirit, that we seem to hear, while we read, the "*Demosthenem ipsum*" uttering it.

Sheridan had, it appears, written a letter, about this time, to his brother Charles, in which, after expressing the feelings of himself and his brother Whigs, at the late unconstitutional victory over their party, he added, "But you are all so void of principle, in Ireland, that you cannot enter into our situation." Charles Sheridan, who, in the late changes, had not thought it necessary to pay his principles the compliment of sacrificing his place to them, considered himself, of course, as included in this stigma; and the defence of time-serving politics which he has set up in his answer, if not so eloquent as that of the great Roman master of this art in his letter to Lentulus, is, at least, as self-conscious and laboured, and betrays altogether a feeling but too worthy of the political meridian from which it issued.

"My dear Dick, *Dublin Castle, 10th March*, 1784.

"I am much obliged to you for the letter you sent me by Orde; I began to think you had forgot I was in existence, but I forgive your past silence on account of your recent kind attention. The new Irish administration have come with the olive branch in their hand, and very wisely, I think; the system, the circumstances, and the manners of the two countries are so totally different, that I can assure you nothing could be so absurd as any attempt to extend the party-distinctions which prevail on your side of the water, to this. Nothing, I will venture to assert, can possibly preserve the connexion between England and Ireland, but a permanent government here, acting upon fixed principles, and pursuing systematic measures. For this reason a change of Chief Governor ought to be nothing more than a simple transfer of government, and by no means to make any change in that political system respecting this country which England must adopt, let who will be the minister and whichever

party may acquire the ascendancy, if she means to preserve Ireland as a part of the British empire.

"You will say that this is a very good plan for people in place, as it tends to secure them against all contingencies; but this, I give you my word, is not my reason for thinking as I do. I must, in the first place, acquaint you that there never can be hereafter in this country any such thing as party connections founded upon political principles: we have obtained all the great objects for which Ireland had contended for many years, and there does not now remain one national object of sufficient importance to unite men in the same pursuit. Nothing but such objects ever did unite men in this kingdom, and that not from principle, but because the spirit of the people was so far roused with respect to points in which the pride, the interest, the commerce, and the prosperity of the nation at large was so materially concerned, that the House of Commons, if they had not the virtue to forward, at least wanted the courage to oppose, the general and determined wish of the whole kingdom. They therefore made a virtue of necessity, joined the standard of a very small popular party; both *Ins* and *Outs* voted equally against government, the latter of course, and the former because each individual thought himself safe in the number who followed his example.

"This is the only instance, I believe, in the history of Irish politics, where a party even appeared to act upon public principle; and as the cause of this singular instance has been removed by the attainment of the only objects which could have united men in one pursuit, it is not probable that we shall in future furnish any other example that will do honour to our public spirit. If you reflect an instant, you will perceive that our subordinate situation necessarily prevents the formation of any party among us, like those you have in England, composed of persons acting upon certain principles, and pledged to support each other. I am willing to allow you that your exertions are directed by public spirit; but if those exertions did not lead to *power*, you must acknowledge that it is probable they would not be made, or if made, that they would not be of much use. The object of a party in England is either to obtain power for themselves, or to take it from those who are in possession of it—they may do this from the purest motives, and with the truest regard for the public good, but still you must allow that power is a very tempting object, the hopes of obtaining it no small incentive to their exertions, and the consequences of success to the individuals of which the party is composed, no small strengthening to the bands which unite them together. Now, if you were to expect similar parties to be formed in Ireland, you would exact of us more virtue than is necessary for yourselves. From the peculiar situation of this country, it is impossible that the exertions of any party here can ever lead to *power*. Here then is one very tempting object placed out of our reach, and, with it, all those looked-for consequences to individuals which, with you, induce them to pledge themselves to each other; so that nothing but poor public spirit would be left to keep our Irish party together, and consequently a greater degree of disinterestedness would be necessary in them, than is requisite in one of your English parties.

"That no party exertion here can ever lead to power is obvious when

you reflect, that we have in fact no *Irish government*; all power here being lodged in a branch of the *English* government, we have no cabinet, no administration of our own, no great offices of state; every office we have is merely ministerial, it confers no power but that of giving advice, which may or may not be followed by the Chief Governor. As all power, therefore, is lodged solely in the English government, of which the Irish is only a branch, it necessarily follows that no exertion of any party here could ever lead to power, unless they overturned the English government in this country, or unless the efforts of such a party in the Irish House of Commons could overturn the British administration in England, and the leaders of it get into their places;—the first, you will allow, would not be a very wise object, and the latter you must acknowledge to be impossible.

"Upon the same principle, it would be found very difficult to form a party in this country which should co-operate with any particular party in England, and consent to stand or fall with them. The great leading interests in this kingdom are of course strongly averse to forming any such connections on your side of the water, as it would tend to create a fluctuation in the affairs of this country that would destroy all their consequence; and, as to the personal friends which a party in England may possibly have in this country, they must in the nature of things be few in number, and consequently could only injure themselves by following the fortunes of a party in England, without being able to render that party the smallest service. And, at all events, to such persons this could be nothing but a losing game. It would be, to refuse to avail themselves of their connections or talents in order to obtain office or honours, and to rest all their pretensions upon the success of a party in another kingdom, to which success they could not in the smallest degree contribute. You will admit that to a party in England, no friends on this side of the water would be worth having who did not possess connections or talents; and if they did possess these, they must of course force themselves into station, let the government of this country be in whose hands it may, and that upon a much more permanent footing than if they were connected with a party in England. What therefore could they gain by such a connection? nothing but the virtue of self-denial, in continuing out of office as long as their friends were so, the chance of coming in, when their friends attained power, and only the chance, for there are interests in this country which must not be offended; and the certainty of going out whenever their friends in England should be dismissed. So that they would exchange the certainty of station upon a permanent footing acquired by their own efforts, connections, or talents, for the chance of station upon a most precarious footing, in which they would be placed in the insignificant predicament of doing nothing for themselves, and resting their hopes and ambition upon the labours of others.

"In addition to what I have said respecting the consequences of the subordinate situation of this country, you are to take into consideration how peculiarly its inhabitants are circumstanced. Two out of three millions are Roman Catholics—I believe the proportion is still larger—and two-thirds of the remainder are violent rank Presbyterians, who have always been, but most particularly of late, strongly averse to all govern-

ment placed in the hands of the members of the church of England; nine-tenths of the property, the landed property of the country I mean, is in the possession of the latter. You will readily conceive how much these circumstances must give persons of property in this kingdom a leaning towards government; how necessarily they must make them apprehensive for themselves, placed between such potent enemies; and how naturally it must make them look up to English government, in whatever hands it may be, for that strength and support, which the smallness of their numbers prevents their finding among themselves, and consequently you will equally perceive that those political or party principles which create such serious differences among you in England, are matters of small importance to the persons of landed property in this country, when compared with the necessity of their having the constant support of an English government.—Here, my dear Dick, is a very long answer to a very few lines in your postscript. But I could not avoid *boring* you on the subject, when you say, 'that we are all so void of principle that we cannot enter into your situation.'

"I have received with the greatest pleasure the accounts of the very considerable figure you have made this sessions in the House of Commons. As I have no doubt but that your Parliament will be dissolved, God send you success a second time at Stafford, and the same to your friend at Westminster. I will not forgive you if you do not give me the first intelligence of both those events. I shall say nothing to you on the subject of your English politics, only that I feel myself much more partial to one side of the question than, in my present situation, it would be of any use to me to avow.—I am the happiest domestic man in the world, and am in daily expectation of an addition to that happiness, and own that a home, which I never leave without regret, nor return to without delight, has somewhat abated my passion for politics, and that warmth I once felt about public questions. But it has not abated the warmth of my private friendships; it has not abated my regard for Fitzpatrick, my anxiety for you, and the warmth of my wishes for the success of your friends, considering them as such.—I beg my love to Mrs. Sheridan and Tom, and am, dear Dick,

"Most affectionately yours,

"C. F. Sheridan."

With respect to the Bill for the better government of India, which Mr. Pitt substituted for that of his defeated rival, its provisions are now, from long experience, so familiarly known, that it would be superfluous to dwell upon either their merits or defects[1]. The two important points in which it differed from the measure of Mr. Fox were, in leaving the management of their commercial concerns still in the hands of the Company, and in making the Crown the virtual depositary of Indian patronage [2], instead of

[1] Three of the principal provisions were copied from the Propositions of Lord North in 1781—in allusion to which Mr. Powys said of the measure, that "it was the voice of Jacob, but the hand of Esau."

[2] "Mr. Pitt's Bill continues the form of the Company's government, and

suffering it to be diverted into the channels of the Whig interest, —never, perhaps, to find its way back again. In which of these directions such an accession of power might, with least mischief to the Constitution, be bestowed, having the experience only of the use made of it on one side, we cannot, with any certainty, pretend to determine. One obvious result of this transfer of India to the Crown has been that smoothness so remarkable in the movements of the system ever since that easy and noiseless play of its machinery, which the lubricating contact of Influence alone could give, and which was wholly unknown in Indian policy, till brought thus by Mr. Pitt under ministerial controul. When we consider the stormy course of Eastern politics before that period—the enquiries, the exposures, the arraignments that took place — the constant hunt after Indian delinquency, in which Ministers joined no less keenly than the Opposition—and then compare all this with the tranquillity that has reigned, since the halcyon incubation of the Board of Controul over the waters,—though we may allow the full share that actual reform and a better system of government may claim in this change, there is still but too much of it to be attributed to causes of a less elevated nature,—to the natural abatement of the watchfulness of the minister over affairs no longer in the hands of others, and to that power of Influence which, both at home and abroad, is the great and ensuring bond of tranquillity, and, like the Chain of Silence mentioned in old Irish poetry, binds all that come within its reach in the same hushing spell of compromise and repose.

It was about this time that, in the course of an altercation with Mr. Rolle, the member for Devonshire, Mr. Sheridan took the opportunity of disavowing any share in the political satires then circulating, under the titles of "The Rolliad" and the "Probationary Odes." "He was aware," he said, "that the Honourable Gentleman had suspected that he was either the author of those compositions, or some way or other concerned in them; but he assured

professes to leave the patronage under certain conditions, and the commerce without condition, in the hands of the Company; but places all matters relating to the *civil* and *military* government and *revenues* in the hands of six Commissioners, to be nominated and appointed by His Majesty, under the title of "Commissioners of the Affairs of India," which Board of Commissioners is invested with the 'superintendence and controul over all the British territorial possessions in the East Indies, and over the affairs of the United Company of Merchants trading thereto.'"—*Comparative Statement of the Two Bills*, read from his place by Mr. Sheridan, on the Discussion of the Declaratory Acts in 1788, and afterwards published.

In another part of this Statement he says, "The present Board of Controul have, under Mr. Pitt's Bill, usurped those very imperial prerogatives from the Crown, which were falsely said to have been given to the new Board of Directors under Mr. Fox's Bill."

him, upon his honour, he was not—nor had he ever seen a line of them till they were in print in the newspaper."

Mr. Rolle, the hero of The Rolliad, was one of those unlucky persons, whose destiny it is to be immortalised by ridicule, and to whom the world owes the same sort of gratitude for the wit of which they were the butts, as the merchants did, in Sinbad's story, to those pieces of meat to which diamonds adhered. The chief offence, besides his political obnoxiousness, by which he provoked this satirical warfare, (whose plan of attack was all arranged at a club held at Becket's,) was the lead which he took in a sort of conspiracy, formed on the ministerial benches, to interrupt, by coughing, hawking, and other unseemly noises, the speeches of Mr. Burke. The chief writers of these lively productions were Tickell, General Fitzpatrick [1], Lord John Townshend [2], Richardson, George Ellis, and Dr. Lawrence [3]. There were also a few minor contributions from the pens of Bate Dudley, Mr. O'Beirne (afterwards Bishop of Meath), and Sheridan's friend, Read. In two of the writers, Mr. Ellis and Dr. Lawrence, we have a proof of the changeful nature of those atoms, whose concourse for the time constitutes Party, and of the volatility with which, like the motes in the sunbeam, described by Lucretius, they can

> "*Commutare viam, retroque repulsa reverti*
> *Nunc huc, nunc illuc, in cunctas denique partes.*"
>
> Change their light course, as fickle chance may guide,
> Now here, now there, and shoot from side to side.

Doctor Lawrence was afterwards a violent supporter of Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Ellis [4] showed the versatility of his wit, as well as of his

[1] To general Fitzpatrick some of the happiest pleasantries are to be attributed; among others, the verses on Brooke Watson, those on the Marquis of Graham, and "The Liars."

[2] Lord John Townshend, the only survivor, at present, of this confederacy of wits, was the author, in conjunction with Tickell, of the admirable Satire, entitled "Jekyll,"—Tickell having contributed only the lines parodied from Pope. To the exquisite humour of Lord John we owe also the Probationary Ode for Major Scott, and the playful parody on "*Donec gratus eram tibi.*"

[3] By Doctor Lawrence the somewhat ponderous irony of the prosaic department was chiefly managed. In allusion to the personal appearance of this eminent civilian, one of the wits of the day thus parodied a passage of Virgil:

> "*Quo tetrior alter*
> *Non fuit, excepto* Laurentis *corpore Turni.*"

[4] It is related that, on one occasion, when Mr. Ellis was dining with Mr. Pitt, and embarrassed naturally by the recollection of what he had been guilty of towards his host in The Rolliad, some of his brother wits, to amuse themselves at his expense, endeavoured to lead the conversation to the subject of this work,

politics, by becoming one of the most brilliant contributors to the Antijacobin.

The Rolliad and The Antijacobin may, on their respective sides of the question, be considered as models of that style of political satire [1], whose lightness and vivacity give it the appearance of proceeding rather from the wantonness of wit than of ill-nature, and whose very malice, from the fancy with which it is mixed up, like certain kinds of fireworks, explodes in sparkles. They, however, who are most inclined to forgive, in consideration of its polish and playfulness, the personality in which the writers of both these works indulged, will also readily admit that by no less shining powers can a licence so questionable be either assumed or palliated, and that nothing but the lively effervescence of the draught can make us forget the bitterness infused into it. At no time was this truth ever more strikingly exemplified than at present, when a separation seems to have taken place between satire and wit, which leaves the former like the toad, *without* the "jewel in its head;" and when the hands, into which the weapon of personality has chiefly fallen, have brought upon it a stain and disrepute, that will long keep such writers as those of the Rolliad and Antijacobin from touching it again.

by asking him various questions as to its authors, etc.—which Mr. Pitt overhearing, from the upper end of the table, leaned kindly towards Ellis, and said,

"*Immo age, et a prima, dic, hospes, origine nobis.*"

The word "*hospes*," applied to the new convert, was happy, and the "*erroresque tuas*," that follows, was, perhaps, left to be implied.

[1] The following just observations upon The Rolliad and Probationary Odes occur in the manuscript Life of Sheridan which I have already cited:—They are, in most instances, specimens of the powers of men, who, giving themselves up to ease and pleasure, neither improved their minds with great industry, nor exerted them with much activity; and have therefore left no very considerable nor durable memorials of the happy and vigorous abilities with which nature had certainly endowed them. The effusions themselves are full of fortunate allusions, ludicrous terms, artful panegyric, and well-aimed satire. The verses are at times far superior to the occasion, and the whole is distinguished by a taste, both in language and matter, perfectly pure and classical; but they are mere occasional productions. They will sleep with the papers of the Craftsman, so vaunted in their own time, but which are never now raked up, except by the curiosity of the historian and the man of literature.

"Wit, being generally founded upon the manners and characters of its own day, is crowned in that day, beyond all other exertions of the mind, with splendid and immediate success. But there is always something that equalizes. In return, more than any other production, it suffers suddenly and irretrievably from the hand of Time. It receives a character the most opposite to its own. From being the most generally understood and perceived, it becomes of all writing the most difficult and the most obscure. Satires, whose meaning was open to the multitude, defy the erudition of the scholar; and comedies, of which every line was felt as soon as it was spoken, require the labour of an antiquary to explain them."

Among other important questions that occupied the attention of Mr. Sheridan at this period, was the measure brought forward under the title of "Irish Commercial Propositions," for the purpose of regulating and finally adjusting the commercial intercourse between England and Ireland. The line taken by him and Mr. Fox in their opposition to this plan was such as to accord, at once, with the prejudices of the English manufacturers and the feelings of the Irish patriots,—the former regarding the measure as fatal to their interests, and the latter rejecting with indignation the boon which it offered, as coupled with a condition for the surrender of the legislative independence of their country.

In correct views of political economy, the advantage throughout this discussion was wholly on the side of the minister; and, in a speech of Mr. Jenkinson, we find (advanced, indeed, but incidentally, and treated by Mr. Fox as no more than amusing theories,) some of those liberal principles of trade which have since been more fully developed, and by which the views of all practical statesmen are, at the present day, directed. The little interest attached by Mr. Fox to the science of Political Economy—so remarkably proved by the fact of his never having read the work of Adam Smith on the subject—is, in some degree, accounted for by the scepticism of the following passage, which occurs in one of his animated speeches on this very question. Mr. Pitt having asserted, in answer to those who feared the competition of Ireland in the market from her low prices of labour, that "great capital would in all cases overbalance cheapness of labour," Mr. Fox questions the abstract truth of this position, and adds,—"General positions of all kinds ought to be very cautiously admitted; indeed, on subjects so infinitely complex and mutable as politics and commerce, a wise man hesitates at giving too implicit a credit to any general maxim of any denomination."

If the surrender of any part of her legislative power could have been expected from Ireland in that proud moment, when her new born Independence was but just beginning to smile in her lap, the acceptance of the terms then proffered by the Minister might have averted much of the evils, of which she was afterwards the victim. The proposed plan being, in itself (as Mr. Grattan called it), "an incipient and creeping Union," would have prepared the way less violently for the completion of that fated measure, and spared at least the corruption and the blood which were the preliminaries of its perpetration at last. But the pride, so natural and honourable to the Irish—had fate but placed them in a situation to assert it with any permanent effect—repelled the idea of being bound even by the commercial regulations of England. The wonderful eloquence of

Grattan, which, like an eagle guarding her young, rose grandly in defence of the freedom to which itself had given birth, would alone have been sufficient to determine a whole nation to his will. Accordingly, such demonstrations of resistance were made both by people and parliament, that the Commercial Propositions were given up by the minister, and this apparition of a Union withdrawn from the eyes of Ireland for the present—merely to come again, in another shape, with many a "mortal murder on its crown, and push her from her stool."

As Mr. Sheridan took a strong interest in this question, and spoke at some length on every occasion when it was brought before the House, I will, in order to enable the reader to judge of his manner of treating it, give a few passages from his speech on the discussion of that Resolution, which stipulated for England a controul over the external legislation of Ireland :—

"Upon this view, it would be an imposition on common sense to pretend, that Ireland could in future have the exercise of free will or discretion upon any of those subjects of legislation, on which she now stipulated to follow the edicts of Great Britain; and it was a miserable sophistry to contend, that her being permitted the ceremony of placing those laws upon her own Statute-book, as a form of promulgating them, was an argument, that it was not the British but the Irish Statutes that bound the people of Ireland. For his part, if he were a member of the Irish Parliament, he should prefer the measure enacting by one decisive vote, that all British laws, to the purposes stipulated, should have immediate operation in Ireland as in Great Britain; choosing rather to avoid the mockery of enacting without deliberation, and deciding where they had no power to dissent.—Where fetters were to be worn, it was a wretched ambition to contend for the distinction of fastening our own shackles."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

"All had been delusion, trick, and fallacy : a new scheme of commercial arrangement is proposed to the Irish as a boon; and the surrender of their Constitution is tacked to it as a mercantile regulation. Ireland, newly escaped from harsh trammels and severe discipline, is treated like a high-mettled horse, hard to catch; and the Irish Secretary is to return to the field, soothing and coaxing him, with a sieve of provender in one hand, but with a bridle in the other, ready to slip over his head while he is snuffling at the food. But this political jockeyship, he was convinced, would not succeed."

In defending the policy, as well as generosity of the concessions made to Ireland by Mr. Fox in 1782, he says,—

"Fortunately for the peace and future union of the two kingdoms, no such miserable and narrow policy entered into the mind of his Right Honourable friend; he disdained the injustice of bargaining with Ireland on such a subject; nor would Ireland have listened to him if he had at-

tempted it. She had not applied to purchase a Constitution; and if a tribute or contribution had been demanded in return for what was then granted, those patriotic spirits who were at that time leading the oppressed people of that insulted country to the attainment of their just rights, would have pointed to other modes of acquiring them;—would have called to them in the words of Camillus *arma aptare atque ferro non auro patriam et libertatem recuperare*."

The following passage is a curious proof of the short-sighted views which prevailed at that period, even among the shrewdest men, on the subject of trade:—

"There was one point, however, in which he most completely agreed with the manufacturers of this country; namely, in their assertion, that if the Irish trader should be enabled to meet the British merchant and manufacturer in the British market, the gain of Ireland must be the loss of England[1]. This was a fact not to be controverted on any principle of common sense or reasonable argument. The pomp of general declamation and waste of fine words, which had on so many occasions been employed to disguise and perplex this plain simple truth, or, still more fallaciously to endeavour to prove, that Great Britain would find her balance in the Irish market, had only tended to show the weakness and inconsistency of the doctrine they were meant to support. The truth of the argument was with the manufacturers; and this formed in Mr. Sheridan's mind, a ground of one of the most vehement objections he had to the present plan."

It was upon the clamour, raised at this time by the English manufacturers, at the prospect of the privileges about to be granted to the trade of Ireland, that Tickell, whose wit was always on the watch for such opportunities, wrote the following fragment, found among the papers of Mr. Sheridan:—

"A Vision.

"After supping on a few Colchester oysters and a small Welsh rabbit, I went to bed last Tuesday night at a quarter before eleven o'clock. I slept quietly for near two hours; at the expiration of which period, my slumber was indeed greatly disturbed by the oddest train of images I ever experienced. I thought that every individual article of my usual dress and furniture was suddenly gifted with the powers of speech, and all at once united to assail me with clamorous reproaches, for my unpardonable neglect of their common interests, in the great question of surrendering our British commerce to Ireland. My hat, my coat, and every button on it, my Manchester waistcoat, my silk breeches, my Birmingham buckles, my shirt-buttons, my shoes, my stockings, my garters, and, what was more troublesome, my night-cap, all joined in a dissonant volley of petitions and remonstrances—which, as I found it impossible to wholly suppress, I thought it most prudent to moderate, by soliciting

[1] Mr. Fox also said, "Ireland cannot make a single acquisition but to the proportionate loss of England."

them to communicate their ideas individually. It was with some difficulty they consented to even this proposal, which they considered as a device to extinguish their general ardour, and to break the force of their united efforts; nor would they by any means accede to it, till I had repeatedly assured them, that, as soon as I heard them separately, I would appoint an *early hour* for receiving them in a joint body. Accordingly, having fixed these preliminaries, my Night-cap thought proper to slip up immediately over my ears, and, disengaging itself from my temples, called upon my Waistcoat, who was rather carelessly reclining on a chair, to attend him immediately at the foot of the bed. My Sheets and Pillow-cases, being all of Irish extraction, stuck close to me, however,—which was uncommonly fortunate, for, not only my Curtains had drawn off to the foot of the bed, but my Blankets also had the audacity to associate themselves with others of the woollen fraternity, at the first outset of this household meeting. Both my Towels attended as evidences at the bar,—but my Pocket-handkerchief, notwithstanding his uncommon forwardness to hold forth the banner of sedition, was thought to be a character of so mixed a complexion, as rendered it more decent for him to reserve his interference till my Snuff-box could be heard—which was settled accordingly.

"At length, to my inconceivable astonishment, my Night-cap, attended as I have mentioned, addressed me in the following terms:—"

* *

Early as was the age at which Sheridan had been transplanted from Ireland—never to set foot upon his native land again—the feeling of nationality remained with him warmly through life, and he was, to the last, both fond and proud of his country. The zeal with which he entered, at this period, into Irish politics, may be judged of from some letters, addressed to him in the year 1785, by Mr. Isaac Corry, who was at that time a member of the Irish Opposition, and combated the Commercial Propositions as vigorously as he afterwards, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, defended their "consummate flower," the Union. A few extracts from these letters will give some idea of the interest attached to this question by the popular party in both countries.

The following, dated August 5, 1785, was written during the adjournment of ten days, that preceded Mr. Orde's introduction of the Propositions:—

"Your most welcome letter, after hunting me some days through the country, has at length reached me. I wish you had sent some notes of your most excellent speech; but such as we have must be given to the public—admirable commentary upon Mr. Pitt's *apology to the People of Ireland*, which must also be published in the manner fitting it. The addresses were sent round to all the towns in the kingdom, in order to give currency to the *humbug*. Being upon the spot, I have my troops in perfect order, and am ready at a moment's warning, for any manœuvre

which may, when we meet in Dublin previous to the next sitting, be thought necessary to follow the petitions for postponing.

"We hear astonishing accounts of *your* greatness in particular. Paddy will, I suppose, some *beau jour* be voting you another 50,000[1], if you go on as you have done.

"I send to-day down to my friend, O'Neill, who waits for a signal only, and we shall go up together. Brownlow is just beside me, and I shall ride over this morning to get him up to consultation in town. . . . . We must get our Whig friends in England to engraft a few slips of Whiggism here—till that is done, there will be neither Constitution for the people nor stability for the government.

"Charlemont and I were of opinion that we should not make the volunteers speak upon the present business; so I left it out in the Resolutions at our late review. They are as tractable as we could desire, and we can manage them completely. We inculcate all moderation—were we to slacken in that, they would instantly step forward."

The date of the following letter is August 10th—two days before Mr. Orde brought forward the Propositions.

"We have got the Bill entire, sent about by Orde. The more it is read, the less it is liked. I made notable use of the clause you sent me before the whole arrived. We had a select meeting to-day of the D. of Leinster, Charlemont, Conolly, Grattan, Forbes, and myself. We think of moving an address to postpone to-morrow till the 15th of January, and have also some Resolutions ready *pro re natâ*, as we don't yet know what shape they will put the business into;—Conolly to move. To-morrow morning we settle the Address and Resolutions, and after that, to-morrow, meet more at large at Leinster House. All our troops muster pretty well —Mountmorris is here, and to be with us to-morrow morning. We reckon on something like a hundred, and some are sanguine enough to add near a score above it—that is too much. The report of to-night is that Orde is not yet ready for us, and will beg a respite of a few days—Beresford is not yet arrived, and that is said to be the cause. Mornington and Poole are come—their muster is as strict as ours. If we divide any thing like a hundred, they will not dare to take a victory over us. Adieu, yours most truly.

"I. C."

The motion for bringing in the bill was carried only by a majority of nineteen, which is thus announced to Mr. Sheridan by his correspondent:—

"I congratulate with you on 108 minority—against 127. The business never can go on. They were astonished, and looked the sorriest devils you can imagine. Orde's exhibition was pitiful indeed—the support of his party weak and open to attack—the debate on their part really poor. On ours, Conolly, O'Neill, and the other country gentlemen, strong and of great weight—Grattan able and eloquent in an uncommon degree—every

[1] Alluding to the recent vote of that sum to Mr. Grattan.

body in high spirits, and altogether a force that was irresistible. We divided at nine this morning, on leave to bring in a Bill for the settlement. The ground fought upon was the Fourth Resolution, and the principle of that in the others. The commercial detail did not belong accurately to the debate, though some went over it in a cursory way. Grattan, two hours and a half—Flood as much—the former brilliant, well attended to, and much admired—the latter tedious from detail; of course, not so well heard, and answered by Foster in detail to refutation.

"The Attorney General defended the constitutional safety under the Fourth Resolution principle. Orde mentioned the Opposition in England twice in his opening speech, with imputations, or insinuations at least, not very favourable. You were not left undefended. Forbes exerted his warm attachment to you with great effect—Burgh, the flag-ship of the Leinster squadron, gave a well supported fire pointed against Pitt, and covering you. Hardy (the Bishop of Down's friend), in a very elegant speech, gave you due honour; and I had the satisfaction of a slight skirmish, which called up the Attorney General, etc. . . . ."

On the 15th of August Mr. Orde withdrew his Bill, and Mr. Corry writes—"I wish you joy a thousand times of our complete victory. Orde has offered the Bill—moved its being printed for his own justification to the country, and no more of it this session. We have the effects of a complete victory."

Another question of much less importance, but more calculated to call forth Sheridan's various powers, was the Plan of the Duke of Richmond for the fortification of dock-yards, which Mr. Pitt brought forward (it was said, with much reluctance,) in the session of 1786, and which Sheridan must have felt the greater pleasure in attacking, from the renegade conduct of its noble author in politics. In speaking of the Report of a Board of General Officers, which had been appointed to examine into the merits of this plan, and of which the Duke himself was President, he thus ingeniously plays with the terms of the art in question, and fires off his wit, as it were, *en ricochet*, making it bound lightly from sentence to sentence:—

"Yet the Noble Duke deserved the warmest panegyrics for the striking proofs he had given of his genius as an engineer; which appeared even in the planning and construction of the paper in his hand! The professional ability of the Master general shone as conspicuously there, as it could upon our coasts. He had made it an argument of posts; and conducted his reasoning upon principles of trigonometry as well as logic. There were certain detached data, like advanced works, to keep the enemy at a distance from the main object in debate. Strong provisions covered the flanks of his assertions. His very queries were in casements. No impression, therefore, was to be made on this fortress of sophistry by desultory observations; and it was necessary to sit down before it, and assail it by regular approaches. It was fortunate, however, to observe, that notwithstanding all the skill employed by the noble and literary engineer, his mode of

defence on paper was open to the same objection which had been urged against his other fortifications; that if his adversary got possession of one of his posts, it became strength against him, and the means of subduing the whole line of his argument."

He also spoke, at considerable length, upon the Plan brought forward by Mr. Pitt for the Redemption of the National Debt—that grand object of the calculator and the financier, and equally likely, it should seem, to be attained by the dreams of the one as by the experiments of the other. Mr. Pitt himself seemed to dread the suspicion of such a partnership, by the care with which he avoided any acknowledgment to Dr. Price, whom he had nevertheless personally consulted on the subject, and upon whose visions of compound interest this fabric of finance was founded.

In opening the Plan of his new Sinking Fund to the House, Mr. Pitt, it is well known, pronounced it to be "a firm column, upon which he was proud to flatter himself his name might be inscribed." Tycho Brahe would have said the same of his Astronomy, and Descartes of his Physics;—but these baseless columns have long passed away, and the Plan of paying debt with borrowed money well deserves to follow them. The delusion, indeed, of which this Fund was made the instrument, during the war with France, is now pretty generally acknowledged; and the only question is, whether Mr. Pitt was so much the dupe of his own juggle, as to persuade himself that thus playing with a debt, from one hand to the other, was paying it—or whether, aware of the inefficacy of his plan for any other purpose than that of keeping up a blind confidence in the money-market, he yet gravely went on, as a sort of High Priest of Finance, profiting by a miracle in which he did not himself believe, and, in addition to the responsibility of the uses to which he applied the money, incurring that of the fiscal imposture by which he raised it.

Though from the prosperous state of the revenue at the time of the institution of this Fund, the absurdity was not yet committed of borrowing money to maintain it, we may perceive by the following acute pleasantry of Mr. Sheridan (who denied the existence of the alleged surplus of income), that he already had a keen insight into the fallacy of that Plan of Redemption afterwards followed:—"At present," he said, "it was clear there was no surplus; and the only means which suggested themselves to him were, a loan of a million for the especial purpose—for the Right Honourable gentleman might say, with the person in the comedy, '*If you won't lend me the money, how can I pay you?*'"

CHAPTER X.

Charges against Mr. Hastings.—Commercial treaty with France.—Debts of the Prince of Wales.

THE calm security into which Mr. Pitt's administration had settled, after the victory which the Tory alliance of King and people had gained for him, left but little to excite the activity of party-spirit, or to call forth those grand explosions of eloquence, which a more electric state of the political world produces. The orators of Opposition might soon have been reduced, like Philoctetes wasting his arrows upon geese at Lemnos [1], to expend the armoury of their wit upon the Grahams and Rolles of the Treasury bench. But a subject now presented itself — the Impeachment of Warren Hastings — which, by embodying the cause of a whole country in one individual, and thus combining the extent and grandeur of a national question with the direct aim and singleness of a personal attack, opened as wide a field for display as the most versatile talents could require, and to Mr. Sheridan, in particular, afforded one of those precious opportunities, of which, if Fortune but rarely offers them to genius, it is genius alone that can fully and triumphantly avail itself.

The history of the rise and progress of British power in India—of that strange and rapid vicissitude, by which the ancient Empire of the Moguls was transferred into the hands of a Company of Merchants in Leadenhall Street—furnishes matter, perhaps, more than any other that could be mentioned, for those strong contrasts and startling associations, to which eloquence and wit often owe their most striking effects. The descendants of a Throne, once the loftiest in the world, reduced to stipulate with the servants of traders for subsistence—the dethronement of Princes converted into a commercial transaction, and a ledger-account kept of the profits of Revolutions—the sanctity of Zenanas violated by search-warrants, and the chicaneries of English Law transplanted, in their most mischievous luxuriance, into the holy and peaceful shades of the Bramins,—such events as these, in which the poetry and the prose of life, its pompous illusions and mean realities, are mingled up so sadly and fantastically together, were of a nature, particularly when recent, to lay hold of the imagination as well as the feelings, and to furnish eloquence with those strong lights and shadows, of which her most animated pictures are composed.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that the warm fancy of Mr. Burke

[1] "*Pinnigero, non armigero in corpore tela exerceantur.*"—Accius, ap. Ciceron. lib. vii. ep. 33.

should have been early and strongly excited by the scenes of which India was the theatre, or that they should have (to use his own words) "constantly preyed upon his peace, and by night and day dwelt on his imagination." His imagination, indeed,—as will naturally happen, where this faculty is restrained by a sense of truth—was always most livelily called into play by events of which he had not himself been a witness; and, accordingly, the sufferings of India and the horrors of revolutionary France were the two subjects upon which it has most unrestrainedly indulged itself. In the year 1780 he had been a member of the Select Committee, which was appointed by the House of Commons to take the affairs of India into consideration, and through some of whose luminous Reports we trace that powerful intellect, which "stamped an image of itself" on every subject that it embraced. Though the reign of Clive had been sufficiently fertile in enormities, and the treachery practised towards Omichund seemed hardly to admit of any parallel, yet the loftier and more prominent iniquities of Mr. Hastings's government were supposed to have thrown even these into shadow. Against him, therefore,—now rendered a still nobler object of attack by the haughty spirit with which he defied his accusers,—the whole studies and energies of Mr. Burke's mind were directed.

It has already been remarked that to the impetuous zeal with which Burke at this period rushed into Indian politics, and to that ascendancy over his party by which he so often compelled them to "swell with their tributary urns his flood," the ill-fated East India Bill of Mr. Fox in a considerable degree owed its origin. In truth, the disposition and talents of this extraordinary man made him at least as dangerous as useful to any party with which he connected himself. Liable as he was to be hurried into unsafe extremes, impatient of contradiction, and with a sort of *feudal* turn of mind, which exacted the unconditional service of his followers, it required, even at that time, but little penetration to foresee the violent schism that ensued some years after, or to pronounce that, whenever he should be unable to command his party, he would desert it.

The materials which he had been collecting on the subject of India, and the indignation with which these details of delinquency had filled him, at length burst forth (like that mighty cloud, described by himself as "pouring its whole contents over the plains of the Carnatic") in his wonderful speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts[1]—a speech, whose only rivals perhaps in all the

[1] Isocrates, in his Encomium upon Helen, dwells much on the advantage to an orator of speaking upon subjects from which but little eloquence is expected —περι των φαυλων και ταπεινων. There is little doubt, indeed, that *surprise* must have considerable share in the pleasure which we derive from eloquence on such

records of oratory, are to be found among three or four others of his own, which, like those poems of Petrarch called *Sorelle* from their kindred excellence, may be regarded as sisters in beauty, and equalled only by each other.

Though the charges against Mr. Hastings had long been threatened, it was not till the present year that Mr. Burke brought them formally forward. He had been, indeed, defied to this issue by the friends of the Governor General, whose reliance, however, upon the sympathy and support of the ministry (accorded, as a matter of course, to most State delinquents,) was, in this instance, contrary to all calculation, disappointed. Mr. Pitt, at the commencement of the proceedings, had shown strong indications of an intention to take the cause of the Governor General under his protection. Mr. Dundas, too, had exhibited one of those convenient changes of opinion, by which such statesmen can accommodate themselves to the passing hue of the Treasury-bench, as naturally as the Eastern insect does to the colour of the leaf on which it feeds. Though one of the earliest and most active denouncers of Indian mis-government, and even the mover of those strong Resolutions in 1782[1] on which some of the chief charges of the present prosecution were founded, he now, throughout the whole of the opening scenes of the Impeachment, did not scruple to stand forth as the warm eulogist of Mr. Hastings, and to endeavour by a display of the successes of his administration to dazzle away attention from its violence and injustice.

This tone, however, did not long continue:—in the midst of the anticipated triumph of Mr. Hastings, the Minister suddenly "changed his mind, and checked his pride." On the occasion of the Benares Charge, brought forward in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox, a majority was, for the first time, thrown into the scale of the accusation; and the abuse that was in consequence showered upon Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas, through every channel of the press, by the friends of Mr. Hastings, showed how wholly unexpected, as well as mortifying, was the desertion.

As but little credit was allowed to conviction in this change,—it being difficult to believe that a Minister should come to the discussion of such a question so lightly ballasted with opinions of his

unpromising topics as have inspired three of the most masterly speeches that can be selected from modern oratory—that of Burke on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, of Grattan on Tithes, and of Mr. Fox on the Westminster Scrutiny.

[1] In introducing the Resolutions, he said, that "he was urged to take this step by an account, which had lately arrived from India, of an act of the most flagrant violence and oppression, and of the grossest breach of faith, committed by Mr. Hastings against Cheyt Sing, the Raja of Benares."

own as to be thrown from his equilibrium by the first wave of argument he encountered, — various statements and conjectures were, at the time, brought forward to account for it. Jealousy of the great and increasing influence of Mr. Hastings at court was, in general, the motive assigned for the conduct of the Minister. It was even believed that a wish expressed by the King, to have his new favourite appointed President of the Board of Control, was what decided Mr. Pitt to extinguish, by co-operating with the Opposition, every chance of a rivalry, which might prove troublesome, if not dangerous, to his power. There is no doubt that the arraigned ruler of India was honoured at this period with the distinguished notice of the Court.— partly, perhaps, from admiration of his proficiency in that mode of governing, to which all Courts are, more or less, instinctively inclined; and partly from a strong distaste to those who were his accusers; which would have been sufficient to recommend any person or measure to which they were opposed.

But whether Mr. Pitt, in the part which he now took, was actuated merely by personal motives, or (as his eulogists represent) by a strong sense of impartiality and justice, he must at all events have considered the whole proceeding, at this moment, as a most seasonable diversion of the attacks of the Opposition, from his own person and government to an object so little connected with either. The many restless and powerful spirits now opposed to him would soon have found, or made, some vent for their energies, more likely to endanger the stability of his power;—and, as an expedient for drawing off some of that perilous lightning, which flashed around him from the lips of a Burke, a Fox, and a Sheridan, the prosecution of a great criminal like Mr. Hastings furnished as efficient a conductor as could be desired.

Still, however, notwithstanding the accession of the Minister, and the impulse given by the majorities which he commanded, the projected Impeachment was but tardy and feeble in its movements, and neither the House nor the public went cordially along with it. Great talents, united to great power—even when, as in the instance of Mr. Hastings, abused—is a combination before which men are inclined to bow implicitly. The iniquities, too, of Indian rulers were of that gigantic kind, which seemed to outgrow censure, and even, in some degree, challenge admiration. In addition to all this, Mr. Hastings had been successful; and success but too often throws a charm round injustice, like the dazzle of the necromancer's shield in Ariosto, before which every one falls

"*Con gli occhi abbacinati, e senza mente.*"

The feelings, therefore, of the public were, at the outset of the prosecution, rather for than against the supposed delinquent. Nor was this tendency counteracted by any very partial leaning towards his accusers. Mr. Fox had hardly yet recovered his defeat on the India Bill, or—what had been still more fatal to him—his victory in the Coalition. Mr. Burke, in spite of his great talents and zeal, was by no means popular. There was a tone of dictatorship in his public demeanour against which men naturally rebelled; and the impetuosity and passion with which he flung himself into every favourite subject, showed a want of self-government but little calculated to inspire respect. Even his eloquence, various and splendid as it was, failed in general to win or command the attention of his hearers, and, in this great essential of public speaking, must be considered inferior to that ordinary, but practical, kind of oratory[1], which reaps its harvest at the moment of delivery, and is afterwards remembered less for itself than its effects. There was a something—which those who have but read him can with difficulty conceive—that marred the impression of his most sublime and glowing displays. In vain did his genius put forth its superb plumage, glittering all over with the hundred eyes of fancy—the gait of the bird was heavy and awkward, and its voice seemed rather to scare than attract. Accordingly, many of those masterly discourses, which, in their present form, may proudly challenge comparison with all the written eloquence upon record, were, at the time when they were pronounced, either coldly listened to, or only welcomed as a signal and excuse for not listening at all. To such a length was this indifference carried, that, on the evening when he delivered his great Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, so faint was the impression it produced upon the House, that Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, as I have heard, not only consulted with each other as to whether it was necessary they should take the trouble of answering it, but decided in the negative. Yet doubtless, at the present moment, if Lord Grenville—master as he is of all the knowledge that belongs to a statesman and a scholar—were asked to point out from the stores of his reading the few models of oratorical composition, to the perusal of which he could most frequently, and with unwearied admiration, return, this slighted and unanswered speech would be among the number.

From all these combining circumstances it arose that the prosecution of Mr. Hastings, even after the accession of the Minister, excited but a slight and wavering interest; and, without some ex-

[1] Whoever, upon comparison, is deemed by a common audience the greatest orator, ought most certainly to be pronounced such by men of science and erudition."—*Hume*, Essay 13.

traordinary appeal to the sympathies of the House and the country—some startling touch to the chord of public feeling—it was questionable whether the enquiry would not end as abortively as all the other Indian inquests [1] that had preceded it.

In this state of the proceeding, Mr. Sheridan brought forward, on the 7th of February in the House of Commons, the charge relative to the Begum Princesses of Oude, and delivered that celebrated Speech [2], whose effect upon its hearers has no parallel in the annals of ancient or modern eloquence. When we recollect the men by whom the House of Commons was at that day adorned, and the conflict of high passions and interests in which they had been so lately engaged;—when we see them all, of all parties, brought (as Mr. Pitt expressed it) "under the wand of the enchanter," and only vying with each other in their description of the fascination by which they were bound;—when we call to mind, too, that he, whom the first statesmen of the age thus lauded, had but lately descended among them from a more aerial region of intellect, bringing trophies falsely supposed to be incompatible with political prowess;—it is impossible to imagine a moment of more entire and intoxicating triumph. The only alloy that could mingle with such complete success must be the fear that it was too perfect ever to come again;—that his fame had then reached the meridian point, and from that consummate moment must date its decline.

Of this remarkable Speech there exists no Report;—for it would

[1] Namely, the fruitless prosecution of Lord Clive by General Burgoyne, the trifling verdict upon the persons who had imprisoned Lord Pigot, and the Bill of Pains and Penalties against Sir Thomas Rumbold, finally withdrawn.

[2] Mr. Burke declared it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument, and wit united, of which there was any record or tradition." Mr. Fox said, "All that he had ever heard, all that he had ever read, when compared with it, dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun;"—and Mr. Pitt acknowledged "that it surpassed all the eloquence of ancient and modern times, and possessed every thing that genius or art could furnish, to agitate and controul the human mind."

There were several other tributes, of a less distinguished kind, of which I find the following account in the Annual Register:—

"Sir William Dolben immediately moved an adjournment of the debate, confessing that, in the state of mind in which Mr. Sheridan's speech had left him, it was impossible for him to give a determinate opinion. Mr. Stanhope seconded the motion. When he had entered the House, he was not ashamed to acknowledge that his opinion inclined to the side of Mr. Hastings. But such had been the wonderful efficacy of Mr. Sheridan's convincing detail of facts, and irresistible eloquence, that he could not but say that his sentiments were materially changed. Nothing, indeed, but information almost equal to a miracle, could determine him not to vote for the charge; but he had just felt the influence of such a miracle, and he could not but ardently desire to avoid an immediate decision. Mr. Matthew Montague confessed that he had felt a similar revolution of sentiment."

be absurd to dignify with that appellation the meagre and lifeless sketch, the

> *Tenuem sine viribus umbram*
> *In faciem Æneæ,*

which is given in the Annual Registers and Parliamentary Debates. Its fame, therefore, remains like an empty shrine—a cenotaph still crowned and honoured, though the inmate is wanting. Mr. Sheridan was frequently urged to furnish a Report himself, and from his habit of preparing and writing out his speeches, there is little doubt that he could have accomplished such a task without much difficulty. But, whether from indolence or design, he contented himself with leaving to imagination, which, in most cases, he knew, transcends reality, the task of justifying his eulogists, and perpetuating the tradition of their praise. Nor, in doing thus, did he act perhaps unwisely for his fame. We may now indulge in dreams of the eloquence that could produce such effects[1], as we do of the music of the ancients and the miraculous powers attributed to it, with as little risk of having our fancies chilled by the perusal of the one, as there is of our faith being disenchanted by hearing a single strain of the other.

After saying thus much, it may seem a sort of wilful profanation, to turn to the spiritless abstract of this speech, which is to be found in all the professed reports of Parliamentary oratory, and which stands, like one of those half-clothed mummies in the Sicilian vaults, with, here and there, a fragment of rhetorical drapery, to give an appearance of life to its marrowless frame. There is, however, one passage so strongly marked with the characteristics of Mr. Sheridan's talent—of his vigorous use of the edge of the blade, with his too frequent display of the glitter of the point—that it may be looked upon as a pretty faithful representation of what he spoke, and claim a place among the authentic specimens of his oratory. Adverting to some of those admirers of Mr. Hastings, who were not so implicit in their partiality as to give unqualified applause to his crimes, but found an excuse for their atrocity in the greatness of his mind, he thus proceeds :—

[1] The following anecdote is given as a proof of the irresistible power of this speech in a note upon Mr. Bisset's History of the Reign of George III. :—

"The late Mr. Logan, well known for his literary efforts, and author of a most masterly defence of Mr. Hastings, went that day to the House of Commons, prepossessed for the accused and against his accuser. At the expiration of the first hour he said to a friend, 'All this is declamatory assertion without proof:'—when the second was finished, 'This is a most wonderful oration:'—at the close of the third, 'Mr. Hastings has acted very unjustifiably;'—the fourth, 'Mr. Hastings is a most atrocious criminal;'—and, at last, 'Of all monsters of iniquity the most enormous is Warren Hastings!'"

"To estimate the solidity of such a defence, it would be sufficient merely to consider in what consisted this prepossessing distinction, this captivating characteristic of greatness of mind. Is it not solely to be traced in great actions directed to great ends? In them, and them alone, we are to search for true estimable magnanimity. To them only can we justly affix the splendid title and honours of real greatness. There was indeed another species of greatness, which displayed itself in boldly conceiving a bad measure, and undauntedly pursuing it to its accomplishment. But had Mr. Hastings the merit of exhibiting either of these descriptions of greatness,—even of the latter? He saw nothing great—nothing magnanimous—nothing open—nothing direct in his measures or in his mind. On the contrary, he had too often pursued the worst objects by the worst means. His course was an eternal deviation from rectitude. He either tyrannised or deceived; and was by turns a Dionysius and a Scapin[1]. As well might the writhing obliquity of the serpent be compared to the swift directness of the arrow, as the duplicity of Mr. Hastings's ambition to the simple steadiness of genuine magnanimity. In his mind all was shuffling, ambiguous, dark, insidious, and little: nothing simple, nothing unmixed: all affected plainness, and actual dissimulation;—a heterogenous mass of contradictory qualities; with nothing great but his crimes; and even those contrasted by the littleness of his motives, which at once denoted both his baseness and his meanness, and marked him for a traitor and a trickster. Nay, in his style and writing there was the same mixture of vicious contrarieties;—the most grovelling ideas were conveyed in the most inflated language, giving mock consequence to low cavils, and uttering quibbles in heroics; so that his compositions disgusted the mind's taste, as much as his actions excited the soul's abhorrence. Indeed this mixture of character seemed by some unaccountable, but inherent quality, to be appropriated, though in inferior degrees, to every thing that concerned his employers. He remembered to have heard an honourable and learned gentleman (Mr. Dundas) remark, that there was something in the first frame and constitution of the Company, which extended the sordid principles of their origin over all their successive operations; connecting with their civil policy, and even with their boldest achievements, the meanness of a pedlar and the profligacy of pirates. Alike in the political and the military line could be observed *auctioneering ambassadors* and *trading generals*;—and thus we saw a revolution brought about by *affidavits*: an army employed in *executing an arrest*; a town besieged on *a note of hand*; a prince dethroned for the *balance of an account*. Thus it was they exhibited a government which united the mock majesty of a bloody sceptre, and the little *traffic of a merchant's counting-house*, wielding a truncheon with one hand, and *picking a pocket with the other*."

The effect of this speech, added to the line taken by the Minister, turned the balance against Hastings, and decided the Impeachment. Congratulations on his success poured in upon Mr. Sheridan, as

[1] The spirit of this observation has been well condensed in the compound name given by the Abbé de Pradt to Napoleon—"Jupiter-Scapin."

may be supposed, from all quarters; and the letters that he received from his own family on the occasion were preserved by him carefully and fondly through life. The following extract from one written by Charles Sheridan is highly honourable to both brothers:—

"My Dear Dick, *Dublin Castle, 13th February*, 1787.

"Could I for a moment forget you were my brother, I should, merely as an Irishman, think myself bound to thank you, for the high credit you have done your country. You may be assured, therefore, that the sense of national pride, which I in common with all your countrymen on this side of the water must feel on this splendid occasion, acquires no small increase of personal satisfaction, when I reflect to whom Ireland is indebted, for a display of ability so unequalled, that the honour derived from it seems too extensive to be concentered in an individual, but ought to give, and I am persuaded will give, a new respect for the name of Irishman. I have heard and read the accounts of your speech, and of the astonishing impression it made, with tears of exultation: but what will flatter you more—I can solemnly declare it to be a fact, that I have, since the news reached us, seen good honest *Irish* pride, national pride I mean, bring tears into the eyes of many persons, on this occasion, who never saw you. I need not, after what I have stated, assure you, that it is with the most heart-felt satisfaction that I offer you my warmest congratulations." * * *

The following is from his eldest sister, Mrs. Joseph Lefanu:—

"My Dear Brother, *16th February*, 1787.

"The day before yesterday I received the account of your glorious speech. Mr. Crauford was so good as to write a more particular and satisfactory one to Mr. Lefanu than we could have received from the papers. I have watched the first interval of ease from a cruel and almost incessant head-ache to give vent to my feelings, and tell you how much I rejoice in your success. May it be entire! May the God who fashioned you, and gave you powers to sway the hearts of men and controul their wayward wills, be equally favourable to you in all your undertakings, and make your reward here and hereafter! Amen, from the bottom of my soul! My affection for you has been ever 'passing the love of women.' Adverse circumstances have deprived me of the pleasure of your society, but have had no effect in weakening my regard for you. I know your heart too well to suppose that regard is indifferent to you, and soothingly sweet to me is the idea that, in some pause of thought from the important matters that occupy your mind, your earliest friend is sometimes recollected by you.

"I know you are much above the little vanity that seeks its gratification in the praises of the million, but you must be pleased with the applause of the discerning,—with the tribute I may say of affection paid to the goodness of your heart. People love your character as much as they admire your talents. My father is, in a degree that I did not expect, gratified with the general attention you have excited here: he seems truly pleased that men should say, 'There goes the father of Gaul.' If your

fame has shed a ray of brightness over all so distinguished as to be connected with you, I am sure I may say it has infused a ray of gladness into my heart, deprest as it has been with ill health and long confinement."

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There is also another letter from this lady, of the same date, to Mrs. Sheridan, which begins thus enthusiastically :—

"My Dear Sheri.

"Nothing but death could keep me silent on such an occasion as this. I wish you joy—I am sure you feel it: 'oh moments worth whole ages past, and all that are to come.' You may laugh at my enthusiasm if you please—I glory in it." * * * * * * * * * *

In the month of April following, Mr. Sheridan opened the Seventh Charge, which accused Hastings of corruption, in receiving bribes and presents. The orator was here again lucky in having a branch of the case allotted to him, which, though by no means so susceptible of the ornaments of eloquence as the former, had the advantage of being equally borne out by testimony, and formed one of the most decided features of the cause. The avidity, indeed, with which Hastings exacted presents, and then concealed them as long as there was a chance of his being able to appropriate them to himself, gave a mean and ordinary air to iniquities, whose magnitude would otherwise have rendered them imposing, if not grand.

The circumstances, under which the present from Cheyte Sing was extorted, shall be related when I come to speak of the great Speech in Westminster Hall. The other strong cases of corruption, on which Mr. Sheridan now dwelt, were the sums given by the Munny Begum (in return for her appointment to a trust for which, it appears, she was unfit,) both to Hastings himself and his useful agent, Middleton. This charge, as far as regards the latter, was never denied—and the suspicious lengths to which the Governor General went, in not only refusing all enquiry into his own share of the transaction, but having his accuser, Nuncomar, silenced by an unjust sentence of death, render his acquittal on this charge such a stretch of charity, as nothing but a total ignorance of the evidence and all its bearings can justify.

The following passage, with which Sheridan wound up his Speech on this occasion, is as strong an example as can be adduced of that worst sort of florid style, which prolongs metaphor into allegory, and, instead of giving in a single sentence the essence of many flowers, spreads the flowers themselves, in crude heaps, over a whole paragraph :—

"In conclusion, (he observed,) that, although within this rank, but infinitely too fruitful wilderness of iniquities—within this dismal and

unhallowed labyrinth—it was most natural to cast an eye of indignation and concern over the wide and towering forest of enormities—all rising in the dusky magnificence of guilt; and to fix the dreadfully-excited attention upon the huge trunks of revenge, rapine, tyranny, and oppression;—yet it became not less necessary to trace out the poisonous weeds, the baleful brushwood, and all the little, creeping, deadly plants, which were, in quantity and extent, if possible, more noxious. The whole range of this far-spreading calamity was sown in the hot-bed of corruption; and had risen, by rapid and mature growth, into every species of illegal and atrocious violence"

At the commencement of the proceedings against Hastings, an occurrence immediately connected with them, had brought Sheridan and his early friend Halhed together, under circumstances as different as well can be imagined from those under which they had parted, as boys. The distance, indeed, that had separated them in the interval was hardly greater than the divergence that had taken place in their pursuits; for, while Sheridan had been converted into a senator and statesman, the lively Halhed had become an East Indian Judge, and a learned commentator on the Gentoo Laws. Upon the subject, too, on which they now met, their views and interests were wholly opposite,—Sheridan being the accuser of Hastings, and Halhed his friend. The following are the public circumstances that led to their interview:

In one of the earliest debates on the Charges against the Governor General, Major Scott having asserted that, when Mr. Fox was preparing his India Bill, overtures of accommodation had been made, by his authority, to Mr. Hastings, added that he (Major Scott) "entertained no doubt that, had Mr. Hastings then come home, he would have heard nothing of all this calumny, and all these serious accusations." Mr. Fox, whom this charge evidently took by surprise, replied that he was wholly ignorant of any such overtures, and that "whoever made, or even hinted, at such an offer, as coming from him, did it without the smallest shadow of authority." By an explanation, a few days after, from Mr. Sheridan, it appeared that he was the person who had taken the step alluded to by Major Scott. His interference, however, he said, was solely founded upon an opinion which he had himself formed with respect to the India Bill, namely, that it would be wiser, on grounds of expediency, not to make it retrospective in any of its clauses. In consequence of this opinion, he had certainly commissioned a friend to enquire of Major Scott, whether, if Mr. Hastings were recalled, he would come home;—but "that there had been the most distant idea of bartering with Mr. Hastings for his support of the Indian Bill, he utterly denied." In conclusion, he referred, for the truth of what he had now stated, to Major Scott, who, instantly rising,

acknowledged that, from enquiries which he had since made of the gentleman deputed to him by Mr. Sheridan on the occasion, he was ready to bear testimony to the fairness of the statement just submitted to the House, and to admit his own mistake in the interpretation which he had put on the transaction.

It was in relation to this misunderstanding that the interview took place in the year 1786 between Sheridan and Halhed—the others present being Major Scott and Doctor Parr, from whom I heard the circumstance. The feelings of this venerable scholar towards "iste Scotus" (as he calls Major Scott in his Preface to Bellendenus) were not, it is well known, of the most favourable kind; and he took the opportunity of this interview to tell that gentleman fully what he thought of him:—"For ten minutes," said the Doctor, in describing his aggression, "I poured out upon him hot, scalding abuse —'twas lava, Sir!"

Among the other questions that occupied the attention of Mr. Sheridan during this session, the most important were the Commercial Treaty with France, and the Debts of the Prince of Wales.

The same erroneous views, by which the opposition to the Irish Commercial Propositions was directed, still continued to actuate Mr. Fox and his friends in their pertinacious resistance to the Treaty with France:—a measure which reflects high honour upon the memory of Mr. Pitt, as one of the first efforts of a sound and liberal policy to break through that system of restriction and interference, which had so long embarrassed the flow of international commerce.

The wisdom of leaving trade to find its own way into those channels which the reciprocity of wants established among mankind opens to it, is one of those obvious truths that have lain long on the highways of knowledge, before practical statesmen would condescend to pick them up. It has been shown, indeed, that the sound principles of commerce, which have at last forced their way from the pages of thinking men into the councils of legislators, were more than a hundred years since promulgated by Sir Dudley North[1];—and in the Querist of Bishop Berkeley may be found the outlines of all that the best friends not only of free trade but of free religion would recommend to her rulers of Ireland at the present day. Thus frequently does Truth, before the drowsy world is prepared for her, like

> "The nice Morn on the Indian steep,
> From her cabin'd loophole peep."

Though Mr. Sheridan spoke frequently in the course of the discussions, he does not appear to have, at any time, encountered the main body of the question, but to have confined himself chiefly

[1] M'Culloch's Lectures on Political Economy.

to a consideration of the effects, which the treaty would have upon the interests of Ireland;—a point which he urged with so much earnestness, as to draw down upon him from one of the speakers the taunting designation of "Self-appointed Representative of Ireland."

Mr. Fox was the most active antagonist of the Treaty; and his speeches on the subject may be counted among those feats of prowess, with which the chivalry of Genius sometimes adorns the cause of Error. In founding, as he did, his chief argument against commercial intercourse upon the "natural enmity" between the two countries, he might have referred, it is true, to high Whig authority:—"The late Lord Oxford told me," says Lord Bolingbroke, "that my Lord Somers being pressed, I know not on what occasion or by whom, on the unnecessary and ruinous continuation of the war, instead of giving reasons to show the necessity of it, contented himself to reply that he had been bred up in a hatred to France."—But no authority, however high, can promote a prejudice into a reason, or conciliate any respect for this sort of vague, traditional hostility, which is often obliged to seek its own justification in the very mischiefs which itself produces. If Mr. Fox ever happened to peruse the praises, which his *Antigallican* sentiments on this occasion procured for him, from the tedious biographer of his rival, Mr. Gifford, he would have suspected, like Phocion, that he must have spoken something unworthy of himself, to have drawn down upon his head a panegyric from such a quarter.

Another of Mr. Fox's arguments against entering into commercial relations with France, was the danger lest English merchants, by investing their capital in foreign speculations, should become so entangled with the interests of another country as to render them less jealous than they ought to be of the honour of their own, and less ready to rise in its defence, when wronged or insulted. But, assuredly, a want of pugnacity is not the evil to be dreaded among nations—still less between two, whom the orator had just represented as inspired by a "natural enmity" against each other. He ought rather, upon this assumption, to have welcomed the prospect of a connection, which, by transfusing and blending their commercial interests, and giving each a stake in the prosperity of the other, would not only soften away the animal antipathy attributed to them, but, by enlisting selfishness on the side of peace and amity, afford the best guarantee against wanton warfare, that the wisdom of statesmen or philosophers has yet devised.

Mr. Burke, in affecting to consider the question in an enlarged point of view, fell equally short of its real dimensions; and even descended to the weakness of ridiculing such commercial arrangements, as unworthy altogether of the contemplation of the higher

order of statesmen. "The Right Honourable gentleman," he said, "had talked of the treaty as if it were the affair of two little counting-houses, and not of two great countries. He seemed to consider it as a contention between the sign of the Fleur-de-lis, and the sign of the Red Lion, which house should obtain the best custom. Such paltry considerations were below his notice."

In such terms could Burke, from temper or waywardness of judgment, attempt to depreciate a speech which may be said to have contained the first luminous statement of the principles of commerce, with the most judicious views of their application to details, that had ever, at that period, been presented to the House.

The wise and enlightened opinions of Mr. Pitt, both with respect to Trade, and another very different subject of legislation, Religion, would have been far more worthy of the imitation of some of his self-styled followers, than those errors which they are so glad to shelter under the sanction of his name. For encroachments upon the property and liberty of the subject, for financial waste and unconstitutional severity, they have the precedent of their great master ever ready on their lips. But, in all that would require wisdom and liberality in his copyists—in the repugnance he felt to restrictions and exclusions, affecting either the worldly commerce of man with man, or the spiritual intercourse of man with his God,—in all this, like the Indian that quarrels with his idol, these pretended followers not only dissent from their prototype themselves, but violently denounce, as mischievous, his opinions when adopted by others.

In attributing to party feelings the wrong views entertained by the Opposition on this question, we should but defend their sagacity at the expense of their candour; and the cordiality, indeed, with which they came forward this year to praise the spirited part taken by the Minister in the affairs of Holland—even allowing that it would be difficult for Whigs not to concur in a measure so national—sufficiently acquits them of any such perverse spirit of party, as would, for the mere sake of opposition, go wrong because the Minister was right. To the sincerity of one of their objections to the Treaty—namely, that it was a design, on the part of France, to detach England, by the temptation of a mercantile advantage, from her ancient alliance with Holland and her other continental connections—Mr. Burke bore testimony, as far as himself was concerned, by repeating the same opinions, after an interval of ten years, in his testamentary work, the "Letters on a Regicide Peace."

The other important question which I have mentioned as engaging, during the session of 1787, the attention of Mr. Sheridan, was the application to Parliament for the payment of the Prince of Wales's debts. The embarrassments of the Heir-Apparent were but a

natural consequence of his situation; and a little more graciousness and promptitude on the part of the King, in interposing to relieve His Royal Highness from the difficulties under which he laboured, would have afforded a chance of detaching him from his new political associates, of which, however the affection of the Royal parent may have slumbered, it is strange that his sagacity did not hasten to avail itself. A contrary system, however, was adopted. The haughty indifference both of the monarch and his minister threw the Prince entirely on the sympathy of the Opposition. Mr. Pitt identified himself with the obstinacy of the father, while Mr. Fox and the Opposition committed themselves with the irregularities of the son; and the proceedings of both parties were such as might have been expected from their respective connections—the Royal mark was but too visible upon each.

One evil consequence, that was on the point of resulting from the embarrassed situation in which the prince now found himself, was his acceptance of a loan which the Duke of Orleans had proffered him, and which would have had the perilous tendency of placing the future Sovereign of England in a state of dependence, as creditor, on a Prince of France. That the negociations in this extraordinary transaction had proceeded farther than is generally supposed, will appear from the following letters of the Duke of Portland to Sheridan:—

"Dear Sheridan, *Sunday noon*, 13 *Dec.*

"Since I saw you I have received a confirmation of the intelligence which was the subject of our conversation. The particulars varied in no respect from those I related to you—except in the addition of a pension, which is to take place immediately on the event which entitles the creditors to payment, and is to be granted for life to a nominee of the D. of O——s. The loan was mentioned in a mixed company by two of the French-women and a Frenchman (none of whose names I know) in *Calonne*'s presence, who interrupted them, by asking, how they came to know any thing of the matter, then set them right in two or three particulars which they had misstated, and afterwards begged them, for God's sake, not to talk of it, because it might be their complete ruin.

"I am going to Bulstrode—but will return at a moment's notice, if I can be of the least use in getting rid of this odious engagement, or preventing its being entered into, if it should not be yet completed.

"Yours ever,

"P."

"Dear Sheridan,

"I think myself much obliged to you for what you have done. I hope I am not too sanguine in looking to a good conclusion of this bad business. I will certainly be in town by two o'clock.

"*Bulstrode, Monday*, 14 *Dec.* "Yours ever,

9 *A. M.* "P."

Mr. Sheridan, who was now high in the confidence of the Prince, had twice, in the course of the year 1786, taken occasion to allude publicly to the embarrassments of His Royal Highness. Indeed, the decisive measure which this Illustrious Person himself had adopted, in reducing his establishment, and devoting a part of his income to the discharge of his debts, sufficiently proclaimed the true state of affairs to the public. Still, however, the strange policy was persevered in, of adding the discontent of the Heir-Apparent to the other weapons in the hands of the Opposition;—and, as might be expected, they were not tardy in turning it to account. In the spring of 1787, the embarrassed state of His Royal Highness's affairs was brought formally under the notice of parliament by Alderman Newenham.

During one of the discussions to which the subject gave rise, Mr. Rolle, the member for Devonshire, a strong adherent of the ministry, in deprecating the question about to be agitated, affirmed that "it went immediately to affect our Constitution in Church and State." In these solemn words it was well understood, that he alluded to a report at that time generally believed, and, indeed, acted upon by many in the etiquette of private life, that a marriage had been solemnized between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert—a lady of the Roman Catholic persuasion, who, with more danger to her own peace than to that of either Church or State, had for some time been the distinguished object of His Royal Highness's affection.

Even had an alliance of this description taken place, the provisions of the Royal Marriage Act would have nullified it into a mere ceremony, inefficient, as it was supposed, for any other purpose than that of satisfying the scruples of one of the parties. But that dread of Popery, which in England starts at its own shadow, took alarm at the consequences of an intercourse so heterodox; and it became necessary, in the opinion of the Prince and his friends, to put an end to the apprehensions that were abroad on the subject.

Nor can it be denied that, in the minds of those who believed that the marriage had been actually solemnized[1], there were, in one point of view, very sufficient grounds of alarm. By the Statute of William and Mary, commonly called the Bill of Rights, it is enacted, among other causes of exclusion from the throne, that "every person who shall marry a Papist shall be excluded, and for ever be incapable to inherit the crown of this realm."—In such cases (adds this truly revolutionary Act) "the people of these realms shall be and are hereby absolved of their allegiance." Under this Act,

[1] Horne Tooke, in his insidious pamphlet on the subject, presumed so far on this belief as to call Mrs. Fitzherbert "Her Royal Highness."

which was confirmed by the Act of Settlement, it is evident that the Heir Apparent would, by such a marriage as was now attributed to him, have forfeited his right of succession to the throne. From so serious a penalty, however, it was generally supposed, he would have been exempted by the operation of the Royal marriage Act (12 George III.), which rendered null and void any marriage contracted by any descendant of George II. without the previous consent of the King, or a twelvemonth's notice given to the Privy Council.

That this Act would have nullified the alleged marriage of the Prince of Wales there is, of course, no doubt;—but that it would have also exempted him from the forfeiture incurred by marriage with a Papist, is a point which, in the minds of many, still remains a question. There are, it is well known, analogous cases in Law, where the nullity of an illegal transaction does not do away the penalty attached to it[1]. To persons, therefore, who believed that the actual solemnization of the marriage could be proved by witnesses present at the ceremony, this view of the case, which seemed to promise an interruption of the Succession, could not fail to suggest some disquieting apprehensions and speculations, which nothing short, it was thought, of a public and authentic disavowal of the marriage altogether would be able effectually to allay.

If in politics Princes are unsafe allies, in connections of a tenderer nature they are still more perilous partners; and a triumph over a Royal lover is dearly bought by the various risks and humiliations which accompany it. Not only is a lower standard of constancy applied to persons of that rank, but when once love-affairs are converted into matters of state, there is an end to all the delicacy and mystery that ought to encircle them. The disavowal of a Royal marriage in the Gazette would have been no novelty in English history[2]; and the disclaimer, on the present occasion, though intrusted to a less official medium, was equally public, strong, and unceremonious.

Mr. Fox, who had not been present in the House of Commons when the member for Devonshire alluded to the circumstance, took

[1] Thus a man, by contracting a second marriage pending the first marriage, commits a felony; and the crime, according to its legal description, consists in marrying, or contracting a marriage—though what he does is no more a marriage than that of the Heir Apparent would be under the circumstances in question.

The same principle, it appears, runs through the whole Law of Entails, both in England and Scotland; and a variety of cases might be cited, in which, though the act done is void, yet the doing of it creates a forfeiture.

[2] See in Ellis's Letters of History, vol. iii, the declarations of Charles II. with respect to his marriage with "one Mrs. Walters," signed by himself, and published in The London Gazette.

occasion, on the next discussion of the question, and as he declared, with the immediate authority of the Prince, to contradict the report of the marriage in the fullest and most unqualified terms:—it was, he said, "a miserable calumny, a low malicious falsehood, which had been propagated without doors, and made the wanton sport of the vulgar;—a tale, fit only to impose upon the lowest orders, a monstrous invention, a report of a fact which had not the smallest degree of foundation, actually impossible to have happened." To an observation from Mr. Rolle, that "they all knew there was an Act of Parliament which forbade such a marriage; but that, though it could not be done under the formal sanction of the law, there were ways in which it might have taken place, and in which that law, in the minds of some persons, might have been satisfactorily evaded,"—Mr. Fox replied, that "he did not deny the calumny in question merely with regard to certain existing laws, but that he denied it *in toto*, in point of fact as well as of law.—it not only never could have happened legally, but it never did happen in any way whatsoever, and had from the beginning been a base and malicious falsehood."

Though Mr. Rolle, from either obstinacy or real distrust, refused, in spite of the repeated calls of Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Grey, to declare himself satisfied with this declaration, it was felt by the minister to be at least sufficiently explicit and decisive, to leave him no further pretext, in the eyes of the public, for refusing the relief which the situation of the Prince required. Accordingly, a message from the Crown on the subject of His Royal Highness's debts was followed by an addition to his income of 10,000*l.* yearly out of the Civil List; an issue of 161,000*l.* from the same source, for the discharge of his debts; and 20,000*l.* on account of the works at Carlton House.

In the same proportion that this authorised declaration was successful in satisfying the public mind, it must naturally have been painful and humiliating to the person whose honour was involved in it. The immediate consequence of this feeling was a breach between that person and Mr. Fox, which, notwithstanding the continuance, for so many years after, of the attachment of both to the same illustrious object, remained it is understood, unreconciled to the last.

If, in the first movement of sympathy with the pain excited in that quarter, a retractation of this public disavowal was thought of, the impossibility of finding any creditable medium through which to convey it must soon have suggested itself to check the intention. Some middle course, however, it was thought might be adopted, which, without going the full length of retracting, might tend at least to unsettle the impression left upon the public, and, in some degree,

retrieve that loss of station, which a disclaimer, coming in such an authentic shape, had entailed. To ask Mr. Fox to discredit his own statement was impossible. An application was, therefore, made to a young member of the party, who was then fast rising into the eminence which he has since so nobly sustained, and whose answer to the proposal is said to have betrayed some of that unaccommodating high-mindedness which, in more than one collision with Royalty, has proved him but an unfit adjunct to a Court. The reply to his refusal was, "Then, I must get Sheridan to say something;"—and hence, it seems was the origin of those few dexterously unmeaning compliments, with which the latter, when the motion of Alderman Newenham was withdrawn, endeavoured, without in the least degree weakening the declaration of Mr. Fox, to restore that equilibrium of temper and self-esteem, which such a sacrifice of gallantry to expediency had naturally disturbed. In alluding to the offer of the Prince, through Mr. Fox, to answer any questions upon the subject of his reported marriage, which it might be thought proper to put to him in the House, Mr. Sheridan said,—"That no such idea had been pursued, and no such enquiry had been adopted, was a point which did credit to the decorum, the feelings, and the dignity of Parliament. But whilst His Royal Highness's feelings had no doubt been considered on this occasion, he must take the liberty of saying, however some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was another person entitled, in every delicate and honourable mind, to the same attention; one, whom he would not otherwise venture to describe or allude to, but by saying it was a name, which malice or ignorance alone could attempt to injure, and whose character and conduct claimed and were entitled to the truest respect."

CHAPTER XI.

Impeachment of Mr. Hastings.

THE motion of Mr. Burke on the 10th of May, 1787, "That Warren Hastings, Esq., be impeached," having been carried without a division, Mr. Sheridan was appointed one of the Managers, "to make good the Articles" of the Impeachment; and, on the 3d of June in the following year, brought forward the same Charge in Westminster Hall which he had already enforced with such wonderful talent in the House of Commons.

To be called upon for a second great effort of eloquence, on a subject of which all the facts and the bearings remained the same, was, it must be acknowledged, no ordinary trial to even the most fertile genius; and Mr. Fox, it is said, hopeless of any second flight

ever rising to the grand elevation of the first, advised that the former Speech should be, with very little change, repeated. But such a plan, however welcome it might be to the indolence of his friend, would have looked too like an acknowledgment of exhaustion on the subject, to be submitted to by one so justly confident in the resources both of his reason and fancy. Accordingly, he had the glory of again opening, in the very same field, a new and abundant spring of eloquence, which, during four days, diffused its enchantment among an assembly of the most illustrious persons of the land, and of which Mr. Burke pronounced at its conclusion, that "of all the various species of oratory, of every kind of eloquence that had been heard, either in ancient or modern times; whatever the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit, could furnish, had not been equal to what that House had that day heard in Westminster Hall. No holy religionist, no man of any description as a literary character, could have come up, in the one instance, to the pure sentiments of morality, or in the other, to the variety of knowledge, force of imagination, propriety and vivacity of allusion, beauty and elegance of diction, and strength of expression, to which they had that day listened. From poetry up to eloquence there was not a species of composition of which a complete and perfect specimen might not have been culled, from one part or the other of the speech to which he alluded, and which, he was persuaded, had left too strong an impression on the minds of that House to be easily obliterated."

As some atonement to the world for the loss of the Speech in the House of Commons, this second master-piece of eloquence on the same subject has been preserved to us in a Report, from the short-hand notes of Mr. Gurney, which was for some time in the possession of the late Duke of Norfolk, but was afterwards restored to Mr. Sheridan, and is now in my hands.

In order to enable the reader fully to understand the extracts from this Report which I am about to give, it will be necessary to detail briefly the history of the transaction, on which the charge brought forward in the Speech was founded.

Among the native Princes who, on the transfer of the sceptre of Tamerlane to the East India Company, became tributaries or rather slaves to that Honourable body, none seems to have been treated with more capricious cruelty than Cheyte Sing, the Rajah of Benares. In defiance of a solemn treaty, entered into between him and the government of Mr. Hastings, by which it was stipulated that, besides his fixed tribute, no further demands of any kind, should be made upon him, new exactions were every year enforced;—while the humble remonstrances of the Rajah against such gross injustice

were not only treated with slight, but punished by arbitrary and enormous fines. Even the proffer of a bribe succeeded only in being accepted[1]—the exactions which it was intended to avert being continued as rigorously as before. At length, in the year 1781, Mr. Hastings, who invariably, among the objects of his government, placed the interests of Leadenhall-Street first on the list, and those of justice and humanity *longo intervallo* after,—finding the treasury of the Company in a very exhausted state, resolved to sacrifice this unlucky Rajah to their replenishment; and having, as a preliminary step, imposed upon him a mulct of 500,000*l.*, set out immediately for his capital, Benares, to compel the payment of it. Here, after rejecting with insult the suppliant advances of the Prince, he put him under arrest, and imprisoned him in his own palace. This violation of the rights and the roof of their sovereign drove the people of the whole province into a sudden burst of rebellion, of which Mr. Hastings himself was near being the victim. The usual triumph, however, of might over right ensued; the Rajah's castle was plundered of all its treasures, and his mother, who had taken refuge in the fort, and only surrendered it on the express stipulation that she and the other princesses should pass out safe from the dishonour of search, was, in violation of this condition, and at the base suggestion of Mr. Hastings himself[2], rudely examined and despoiled of all her effects. The Governor-General, however, in this one instance, incurred the full odium of iniquity without reaping any of its reward. The treasures found in the castle of the Rajah were inconsiderable, and the soldiers, who had shown themselves so docile in receiving the lessons of plunder, were found inflexibly obstinate in refusing to admit their instructor to a share. Disappointed, therefore, in the primary object of his expedition, the Governor-General looked round for some richer harvest of rapine, and the Begums of Oude presented themselves as the most convenient victims. These Princesses, the mother and grandmother of the

[1] This was the transaction that formed one of the principal grounds of the Seventh Charge brought forward in the House of Commons by Mr. Sheridan. The suspicious circumstances attending this present are thus summed up by Mr. Mill: —"At first, perfect concealment of the transaction—such measures, however, taken as may, if afterwards necessary, appear to imply a design of future disclosure;—when concealment becomes difficult and hazardous, then disclosure is made." —*History of British India*

[2] In his letter to the Commanding Officer at Bidgegur, The following are the terms in which he conveys the hint: "I apprehend that she will contrive to defraud the captors of a considerable part of the booty, by being suffered to retire *without examination*. But this is your consideration, and not mine. I should be very sorry that your officers and soldiers lost any part of the reward to which they are so well entitled; but I cannot make any objection, as you must be the best judge of the expediency of the *promised* indulgence to the Rannee."

reigning Nabob of Oude, had been left by the late sovereign in possession of certain government-estates, or jaghires, as well as of all the treasure that was in his hands at the time of his death, and which the orientalized imaginations of the English exaggerated to an enormous sum. The present Nabob had evidently looked with an eye of cupidity on this wealth, and had been guilty of some acts of extortion towards his female relatives, in consequence of which the English government had interfered between them,—and had even guaranteed to the mother of the Nabob the safe possession of her property, without any further encroachment whatever. Guarantees and treaties, however, were but cobwebs in the way of Mr. Hastings; and on his failure at Benares, he lost no time in concluding an agreement with the Nabob, by which (in consideration of certain measures of relief to his dominions) this Prince was bound to plunder his mother and grandmother of all their property, and place it at the disposal of the Governor-General. In order to give a colour of justice to this proceeding, it was[1] pretended that these Princesses had taken advantage of the late insurrection at Benares, to excite a similar spirit of revolt in Oude against the reigning Nabob and the English government. As Law is but too often, in such cases, the ready accomplice of Tyranny, the services of the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, were called in to sustain the accusations; and the wretched mockery was exhibited of a Judge travelling about in search of evidence[2], for the express purpose of proving a charge, upon which judgment had been pronounced and punishment decreed already.

The Nabob himself, though sufficiently ready to make the wealth of those venerable ladies occasionally minister to his wants, yet shrunk back, with natural reluctance, from the summary task now

[1] It was the practice of Mr. Hastings (says Burke, in his fine Speech on Mr. Pitt's India Bill, March 22, 1786,) to examine the country, and wherever he found money to affix guilt. A more dreadful fault could not be alleged against a native than that he was rich."

[2] This journey of the Chief Justice in search of evidence is thus happily described by Sheridan in the Speech:—"When, on the 28th of November, he was busied at Lucknow on that honourable business, and when, three days after, he was found at Chunar, at the distance of 200 miles, still searching for affidavits, and, like Hamlet's ghost, exclaiming 'Swear!' his progress on that occasion was so whimsically rapid, compared with the gravity of his employ, that an observer would be tempted to quote again from the same scene, 'Ha! Old Truepenny, canst thou mole so fast i' the ground?' Here, however, the comparison ceased; for, when Sir Elijah made his visit to Lucknow 'to whet the almost blunted purpose' of the Nabob, his language was wholly different from that of the poet,—for it would have been totally against his purpose to have said,

> 'Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy *mother* aught.'"

imposed upon him; and it was not till after repeated and peremptory remonstrances from Mr. Hastings, that he could be induced to put himself at the head of a body of English troops, and take possession, by unresisted force, of the town and palace of these Princesses. As the treasure, however, was still secure in the apartments of the women,—that circle, within which even the spirit of English rapine did not venture,—an expedient was adopted to get over this inconvenient delicacy. Two aged eunuchs of high rank and distinction, the confidential agents of the Begums, were thrown into prison, and subjected to a course of starvation and torture, by which it was hoped that the feelings of their mistresses might be worked upon, and a more speedy surrender of their treasure wrung from them. The plan succeeded:—upwards of 500,000*l.* was procured to recruit the finances of the Company: and thus, according to the usual course of British power in India, rapacity but levied its contributions in one quarter, to enable war to pursue its desolating career in another.

To crown all, one of the chief articles of the treaty, by which the Nabob was reluctantly induced to concur in these atrocious measures, was, as soon as the object had been gained, infringed by Mr. Hastings, who, in a letter to his colleagues in the government, honestly confesses that the concession of that article was only a fraudulent artifice of diplomacy, and never intended to be carried into effect.

Such is an outline of the case, which, with all its aggravating details, Mr. Sheridan had to state in these two memorable Speeches; and it was certainly most fortunate for the display of his peculiar powers, that this should be the Charge confided to his management. For, not only was it the strongest, and susceptible of the highest charge of colouring, but it had also the advantage of grouping together all the principal delinquents of the trial, and affording a gradation of hue, from the showy and prominent enormities of the Governor-General and Sir Elijah Impey in the front of the picture, to the subordinate and half-tint iniquity of the Middletons and Bristows in the back-ground.

Mr. Burke, it appears, had at first reserved this grand part in the drama of the Impeachment for himself; but, finding that Sheridan had also fixed his mind upon it, he, without hesitation, resigned it into his hands; thus proving the sincerity of his zeal in the cause[1], by sacrificing even the vanity of talent to its success.

[1] Of the lengths to which this zeal could sometimes carry his fancy and language, rather, perhaps, than his actual feelings, the following anecdote is a remarkable proof. On one of the days of the trial, Lord——, who was then a boy, having been introduced by a relative into the Manager's box, Burke said to him,

The following letters from him, relative to the Impeachment, will be read with interest. The first is addressed to Mrs. Sheridan, and was written, I think, early in the proceedings; the second is to Sheridan himself:—

"Madam,

"I am sure you will have the goodness to excuse the liberty I take with you, when you consider the interest which I have and which the Public have (the said Public being, at least, half an inch a taller person than I am,) in the use of Mr. Sheridan's abilities. I know that his mind is seldom unemployed; but then, like all such great and vigorous minds, it takes an eagle flight by itself, and we can hardly bring it to rustle along the ground, with us birds of meaner wing, in coveys. I only beg that you will prevail on Mr. Sheridan to be with us *this day*, at half after three, in the Committee. Mr. Wombell, the Paymaster of Oude, is to be examined there *to-day*. Oude is Mr. Sheridan's particular province; and I do most seriously ask that he would favour us with his assistance. What will come of the examination I know not; but, without him, I do not expect a great deal from it; with him, I fancy we may get out something material. Once more let me intreat your interest with Mr. Sheridan and your forgiveness for being troublesome to you, and to do me the justice to believe me, with the most sincere respect,

"Madam, your most obedient
"and faithful humble Servant,

"*Thursday*, 9 *o'clock*. "Edm. Burke."

"My dear Sir,

"You have only to wish to be excused to succeed in your wishes;—for, indeed, he must be a great enemy to himself who can consent, on account of a momentary ill-humour, to keep himself at a distance from you.

"Well, all will turn out right,—and half of you, or a quarter, is worth five other men. I think that this cause, which was originally yours, will be recognized by you, and that you will again possess yourself of it. The owner's mark is on it, and all our docking and cropping cannot hinder its being known and cherished by its original master. My most humble respects to Mrs. Sheridan. I am happy to find that she takes in good part the liberty I presumed to take with her. Grey has done much and will do every thing. It is a pity that he is not always toned to the full extent of his talents.

"Most truly yours,

"*Monday*. "Edm. Burke.

"I feel a little sickish at the approaching day. I have read much—too

"I am glad to see you here—I shall be still gladder to see you there—(pointing to the Peers' seats)—I hope you will be *in at the death*—I should like to *blood* you."

much, perhaps,—and, in truth, am but poorly prepared. Many things, too, have broken in upon me '."

Though a Report, however accurate, must always do injustice to that effective kind of oratory which is intended rather to be heard than read, and, though frequently, the passages, that most roused and interested the hearer, are those that seem afterwards the tritest and least animating for the reader[2], yet, with all this disadvantage, the celebrated oration in question so well sustains its reputation in the perusal, that it would be injustice, having an authentic Report in my possession, not to produce some specimens of its style and spirit.

In the course of this exordium, after dwelling upon the great importance of the enquiry in which they were engaged, and disclaiming for himself and his brother-managers any feeling of personal malice against the defendant, or any motive but that of retrieving the honour of the British name in India, and bringing down punishment upon those whose inhumanity and injustice had disgraced it,—he thus proceeds to conciliate the Court by a warm tribute to the purity of English justice:—

"However, when I have said this, I trust Your Lordships will not believe that, because something is necessary to retrieve the British character, we call for an example to be made, without due and solid proof of the guilt of the person whom we pursue:—no, my Lords, we know well that it is the glory of this Constitution, that not the general fame or character of any man—not the weight or power of any prosecutor—no plea of moral or political expediency—not even the secret consciousness of guilt, which may live in the bosom of the Judge, can justify any British Court in passing any sentence, to touch a hair of the head, or an atom, in any respect, of the property, of the fame, of the liberty of the poorest or meanest subject that breathes the air of this just and free land. We know, my Lords, that there can be no legal guilt without legal proof, and that the rule which defines the evidence is as much the law of the land as that which creates the crime. It is upon that ground we mean to stand."

Among those ready equivocations and disavowals, to which Mr. Hastings had recourse upon every emergency, and in which practice seems to have rendered him as shameless as expert, the step which he took with regard to his own defence during the trial was not the least remarkable for promptness and audacity. He had,

[1] For this letter, as well as some other valuable communications, I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Burgess,—the Solicitor and friend of Sheridan during the last twenty years of his life.

[2] The converse assertion is almost equally true. Mr. Fox used to ask of a printed speech, 'Does it read well?" and if answered in the affirmative, said, "Then it was a bad speech."

at the commencement of the prosecution, delivered at the bar of the House of Commons, as his own, a written refutation of the charges then pending against him in that House, declaring, at the same time, that "if truth could tend to convict him, he was content to be, himself, the channel to convey it." Afterwards, however, on finding that he had committed himself rather imprudently in this defence, he came forward to disclaim it at the bar of the House of Lords, and brought his friend Major Scott to prove that it had been drawn up by Messrs. Shore, Middleton, etc. etc. — that he himself had not even seen it, and therefore ought not to be held accountable for its contents. In adverting to this extraordinary evasion, Mr. Sheridan thus shrewdly and playfully exposes all the persons concerned in it :—

"Major Scott comes to your bar—describes the shortness of time—represents Mr. Hastings as it were *contracting for* a character—putting his memory *into commission*—making *departments* for his conscience. A number of friends meet together, and he, knowing (no doubt) that the accusation of the Commons had been drawn up by a Committee, thought it necessary, as a point of punctilio, to answer it by a Committee also. One furnishes the raw material of fact, the second spins the argument, and the third twines up the conclusion; while Mr. Hastings, with a master's eye, is cheering and looking over this loom. He says to one, 'You have got my good faith in your hands—*you*, my veracity to manage. Mr. Shore, I hope you will make me a good financier—Mr. Middleton, you have my humanity in commission.'—When it is done, he brings it to the House of Commons, and says, 'I was equal to the task. I knew the difficulties, but I scorn them: here is the truth, and if the truth will convict me, I am content myself to be the channel of it.' His friends hold up their heads, and say, 'What noble magnanimity! This must be the effect of conscious and real innocence.' Well, it is so received, it is so argued upon,—but it fails of its effect

"Then says Mr. Hastings,—'That my defence! no, mere journeyman-work,—good enough for the Commons, but not fit for Your Lordships' consideration.' He then calls upon his Counsel to save him :—'I fear none of my accuser's witnesses—I know some of them well—I know the weakness of their memory, and the strength of their attachment—I fear no testimony but my own—save me from the peril of my own panegyric—preserve me from that, and I shall be safe.' Then is this plea brought to Your Lordships' bar, and Major Scott gravely asserts,—that Mr. Hastings did, at the bar of the House of Commons, vouch for facts of which he was ignorant, and for arguments which he had never read.

"After such an attempt, we certainly are left in doubt to decide, to *which* set of his friends Mr. Hastings is the least obliged, those who assisted him in making his defence, or those who advised him to deny it."

He thus describes the feelings of the people of the East with respect to the unapproachable sanctity of their Zenanas :—

"It is too much, I am afraid, the case, that persons, used to European manners, do not take up these sort of considerations at first with the seriousness that is necessary. For Your Lordships cannot even learn the right nature of those people's feelings and prejudices from any history of other Mahometan countries,—not even from that of the Turks, for they are a mean and degraded race in comparison with many of these great families, who, inheriting from their Persian ancestors, preserve a purer style of prejudice and a loftier superstition. Women there are not as in Turkey—they neither go to the mosque nor to the bath—it is not the thin veil alone that hides them—but in the inmost recesses of their Zenana they are kept from public view by those reverenced and protected walls, which, as Mr. Hastings and Sir Elijah Impey admit, are held sacred even by the ruffian hand of war, or by the more uncourteous hand of the law. But, in this situation, they are not confined from a mean and selfish policy of man—not from a coarse and sensual jealousy—enshrined, rather than immured, their habitation and retreat is a sanctuary, not a prison—their jealousy is their own—a jealousy of their own honour, that leads them to regard liberty as a degradation, and the gaze of even admiring eyes as inexpiable pollution to the purity of their fame and the sanctity of their honour.

"Such being the general opinion, (or prejudices, let them be called,) of this country, Your Lordships will find, that whatever treasures were given or lodged in a Zenana of this description must, upon the evidence of the thing itself, be placed beyond the reach of resumption. To dispute with the Counsel about the original right to those treasures—to talk of a title to them by the Mahometan law!—their title to them is the title of a Saint to the relics upon an altar, placed there by Piety [1], guarded by holy Superstition, and to be snatched from thence only by Sacrilege."

In showing that the Nabob was driven to this robbery of his relatives by other considerations than those of the pretended rebellion, which was afterwards conjured up by Mr. Hastings to justify it, "he says,—

"The fact is, that through all his defences—through all his various false suggestions—through all these various rebellions and disaffections, Mr. Hastings never once lets go this plea—of unextinguishable right in the Nabob. He constantly represents the seizing the treasures as a resumption of a right which he could not part with;—as if there were literally something in the Koran, that made it criminal in a true Mussulman to keep his engagements with his relations, and impious in a son to abstain from plundering his mother. I do gravely assure Your Lordships

[1] This metaphor was rather roughly handled afterwards (1794) by Mr. Law, one of the adverse Counsel, who asked, how could the Begum be considered as "a Saint," or how were the camels, which formed part of the treasure, to be "placed upon the altar?" Sheridan, in reply, said, "It was the first time in his life he had ever heard of *special pleading* on a *metaphor*, or a *bill of indictment* against a trope. But such was the turn of the Learned Counsel's mind, that, when he attempted to be humorous, no jest could be found, and, when serious, no fact was visible."

that there is no such doctrine in the Koran, and no such principle makes a part in the civil or municipal jurisprudence of that country. Even after these Princesses had been endeavouring to dethrone the Nabob and to extirpate the English, the only plea the Nabob ever makes, is his right under the Mahomedan law; and the truth is, he appears never to have heard any other reason, and I pledge myself to make it appear to Your Lordships, however extraordinary it may be, that not only had the Nabob never heard of the rebellion till the moment of seizing the palace, but, still further, that he never heard of it at all;—that this extraordinary rebellion, which was as notorious as the rebellion of 1745 in London, was carefully concealed from those two parties—the Begums who plotted it, and the Nabob who was to be the victim of it.

"The existence of this rebellion was not the secret, but the notoriety of it was the secret;—it was a rebellion which had for its object the destruction of no human creature but those who planned it;—it was a rebellion which, according to Mr. Middleton's expression, no man, either horse or foot, ever marched to quell. The Chief Justice was the only man who took the field against it,—the force against which it was raised, instantly withdrew to give it elbow-room,—and, even then, it was a rebellion which perversely showed itself in acts of hospitality to the Nabob whom it was to dethrone, and to the English whom it was to extirpate;—it was a rebellion plotted by two feeble old women, headed by two eunuchs, and suppressed by an affidavit."

The acceptance, or rather exaction, of the private present of 100,000*l.* is thus animadverted upon:

"My Lords, such was the distressed situation of the Nabob about a twelvemonth before Mr. Hastings met him at Chunar. It was a twelvemonth, I say, after this miserable scene—a mighty period in the progress of British rapacity—it was (if the Counsel will) after some natural calamities had aided the superior rigour of British violence and rapacity—it was after the country had felt other calamities besides the English—it was after the angry dispensations of Providence had, with a progressive severity of chastisement, visited the land with a famine one year, and with a Col. Hannay the next—it was after he, this Hannay, had returned to retrace the steps of his former ravages—it was after he and his voracious crew had come to plunder ruins which himself had made, and to glean from desolation the little that famine had spared, or rapine overlooked;—*then* it was that this miserable, bankrupt Prince marching, through his country, besieged by the clamours of his starving subjects, who cried to him for protection through their cages—meeting the curses of some of his subjects, and the prayers of others—with famine at his heels, and reproach following him,—then it was that this Prince is represented as exercising this act of prodigal bounty to the very man whom he here reproaches—to the very man whose policy had extinguished his power, and whose creatures had desolated his country. To talk of a free-will gift! it is audacious and ridiculous to name the supposition. It was *not* a free-will gift. What was it then? was it a bribe? or was it extortion? I shall prove it was both—it was an act of gross bribery and of rank extortion."

Again he thus adverts to this present:

"The first thing he does, is to leave Calcutta, in order to go to the relief of the distressed Nabob. The second thing, is to take 100,000*l.* from that distressed Nabob on account of the distressed Company. And the third thing is to ask of the distressed company this very same sum, on account of the distresses of Mr. Hastings. There never were three distresses that seemed so little reconcileable with one another."

Anticipating the plea of state-necessity, which might possibly be set up in defence of the measures of the Governor-General, he breaks out into the following rhetorical passage:—

"State necessity! no, my Lords; that imperial tyrant, *State-Necessity*, is yet a generous despot,—bold is his demeanour, rapid his decisions, and terrible his grasp. But what he does, my Lords, he dares avow, and, avowing, scorns any other justification, than the great motives that placed the iron sceptre in his hand. But a quibbling, pilfering, prevaricating State-Necessity, that tries to skulk behind the skirts of Justice;—a State-Necessity that tries to steal a pitiful justification from whispered accusations and fabricated rumours;—No, my Lords, that is no State-Necessity;—tear off the mask, and you see coarse, vulgar avarice,—you see peculation, lurking under the gaudy disguise, and adding the guilt of libelling the public honour to its own private fraud.

"My Lords, I say this, because I am sure the Managers would make every allowance that state-necessity could claim upon any great emergency. If any great man in bearing the arms of this country;—if any Admiral, bearing the vengeance and the glory of Britain to distant coasts, should be compelled to some rash acts of violence, in order, perhaps, to give food to those who are shedding their blood for Britain;—if any great General, defending some fortress, barren itself, perhaps, but a pledge of the pride, and, with the pride, of the power of Britain; if such a man were to * * * while he himself was * * at the top, like an eagle besieged in its imperial nest[1];—would the Commons of England come to accuse or to arraign such acts of state-necessity? No."

In describing that swarm of English pensioners and placemen, who were still, in violation of the late purchased treaty, left to prey on the finances of the Nabob, he says,—

"Here we find they were left, as heavy a weight upon the Nabob as ever,—left there with as keen an appetite, though not so clamorous. They were reclining on the roots and shades of that spacious tree, which their predecessors had stripped, branch and bough—watching with eager eyes the first budding of a future prosperity, and of the opening harvest which they considered as the prey of their perseverance and rapacity."

We have, in the close of the following passage, a specimen of

[1] The Reporter, at many of these passages, seems to have thrown aside his pen in despair.

that lofty style, in which, as if under the influence of Eastern associations, almost all the Managers of this Trial occasionally indulged [1].—

"I do not mean to say that Mr. Middleton had *direct* instructions from Mr. Hastings,—that he told him to go, and give that fallacious assurance to the Nabob,—that he had that order *under his hand*. No—but in looking attentively over Mr. Middleton's correspondence, you will find him say, upon a more important occasion, 'I don't expect your public authority for this;—it is enough if you but *hint* your pleasure.' He knew him well; he could interpret every nod and motion of that head; he understood the glances of that eye which sealed the perdition of nations, and at whose throne Princes waited, in pale expectation, for their fortune or their doom."

The following is one of those laboured passages, of which the orator himself was perhaps most proud, but in which the effort to be eloquent is too visible, and the effect, accordingly, falls short of the pretension:—

"You see how Truth—empowered by that will which gives a giant's nerve to an infant's arm—has burst the monstrous mass of fraud that has endeavoured to suppress it—calls now to Your Lordships, in the weak but clear tone of that Cherub, Innocence, whose voice is more persuasive than eloquence, more convincing than argument, whose look is supplication, whose tone is conviction,—it calls upon you for redress, it calls upon you for vengeance upon the oppressor, and points its heaven-directed hand to the detested, but unrepenting author of its wrongs!"

His description of the desolation brought upon some provinces of Oude by the misgovernment of Colonel Hannay, and of the insurrection at Goruckpore against that officer in consequence, is, perhaps, the most masterly portion of the whole speech:—

"If we could suppose a person to have come suddenly into the country, unacquinted with any circumstances that had passed since the days of Sujah ul Dowlah, he would naturally ask—what cruel hand has wrought this wide desolation, what barbarian foe has invaded the country, has desolated its fields, depopulated its villages? He would ask, what disputed succession

[1] Much of this, however, is to be set down to the gratuitous bombast of the Reporter. Mr. Fox, for instance, is made to say, "Yes, my Lords, happy is it for the world, that the penetrating gaze of Providence searches after man, and in the dark den where he has stifled the remonstrances of conscience, darts his compulsatory ray, that, bursting the secrecy of guilt, drives the criminal frantic to confession and expiation." *History of the Trial.*—Even one of the Counsel, Mr. Dallas, is represented as having caught this Oriental contagion, to such a degree as to express himself in the following manner:—"We are now, however, (said the Counsel) advancing from the star-light of Circumstance to the day-light of Discovery; the sun of Certainty is melting the darkness, and—we are arrived at facts admitted by both parties!"

civil rage, or frenzy of the inhabitants, had induced them to act in hostility to the words of God, and the beauteous works of man? He would ask, what religious zeal or frenzy had added to the mad despair and horrors of war?—The ruin is unlike any thing that appears recorded in any age; it looks like neither the barbarities of men, nor the judgments of vindictive heaven. There is a waste of desolation, as if caused by fell destroyers, never meaning to return, and making but a short period, of their rapacity. It looks as if some fabled monster had made its passage through the country, whose pestiferous breath had blasted more than its voracious appetite could devour.

"If there had been any men in the country, who had not their hearts and souls so subdued by fear, as to refuse to speak the truth at all upon such a subject, they would have told him there had been no war since the time of Sujah ul Dowlah,—tyrant, indeed, as he was, but then deeply regretted by his subjects—that no hostile blow of any enemy had been struck in that land—that there had been no disputed succession—no civil war—no religious frenzy. But that these were the tokens of British friendship, the marks left by the embraces of British allies—more dreadful than the blows of the bitterest enemy. They would tell him that these allies had converted a prince into a slave, to make him the principal in the extortion upon his subjects;—that their rapacity increased in proportion as the means of supplying their avarice diminished; that they made the sovereign pay as if they had a right to an increased price, because the labour of extortion and plunder increased. To such causes, they would tell him, these calamities were owing.

"Need I refer Your Lordships to the strong testimony of Major Naylor when he rescued Colonel Hannay from their hands—where you see that this people, born to submission and bent to most abject subjection—that even they, in whose meek hearts injury had never yet begot resentment, nor even despair bred courage—that *their* hatred, *their* abhorrence of Colonel Hannay was such that they clung round him by thousands and thousands;—that when Major Naylor rescued him, they refused life from the hand that could rescue Hannay;—that they nourished this desperate consolation, that by their death they should at least thin the number of wretches who suffered by his devastation and extortion. He says that, when he crossed the river, he found the poor wretches quivering upon the parched banks of the polluted river encouraging their blood to flow, and consoling themselves with the thought, that it would not sink into the earth, but rise to the common God of humanity, and cry aloud for vengeance on their destroyers!—This warm description—which is no declamation of mine, but founded in actual fact, and in fair, clear proof before Your Lordships—speaks powerfully what the cause of these oppressions were, and the perfect justness of those feelings that were occasioned by them. And yet, my Lords, I am asked to prove *why* these people arose in such concert:—'there must have been machinations forsooth, and the Begums' machinations to produce all this!'—Why did they rise!—Because they were people in human shape; because patience under the detested tyranny of man is rebellion to the sovereignty of God; because allegiance to that Power that gives us the *forms* of men commands us to maintain the *rights* of men. And never yet was this truth dismissed from the human heart—never

in any time, in any age—never in any clime, where rude man ever had any social feeling, or where corrupt refinement had subdued all feelings,—never was this one unextinguishable truth destroyed from the heart of man, placed as it is, in the core and centre of it by his Maker, that man was not made the property of man; that human power is a trust for human benefit; and that when it is abused, revenge becomes justice, if not the bounden duty of the injured. These, my Lords, were the causes why these people rose."

Another passage in the second day's Speech is remarkable, as exhibiting a sort of tourney of intellect between Sheridan and Burke, and in that field of abstract speculation, which was the favourite arena of the latter. Mr. Burke had, in opening the prosecution, remarked, that prudence is a quality incompatible with vice, and can never be effectively enlisted in its cause:—"I never (he said) knew a man who was bad fit for *service* that was good. There is always some disqualifying ingredient, mixing and spoiling the compound. The man seems paralytic on that side, his muscles there have lost their very tone and character—they cannot move. In short, the accomplishment of any thing good is a physical impossibility for such a man. There is decrepitude as well as distortion: he could not if he would, is not more certain than that he would not if he could." To this sentiment the allusions in the following passage refer:—

"I am perfectly convinced that there is one idea which must arise in Your Lordships' minds as a subject of wonder,—how a person of Mr. Hastings's reputed abilities can furnish such matter of accusation against himself. For, it must be admitted that never was there a person who seems to go so rashly to work, with such an arrogant appearance of contempt for all conclusions, that may be deduced from what he advances upon the subject. When he seems most earnest and laborious to defend himself, it appears as if he had but one idea uppermost in his mind—a determination not to care what he says, provided he keeps clear of fact. He knows that truth must convict him, and concludes, *à converso*, that falsehood will acquit him; forgetting that there must be some connexion, some system, some co-operation, or, otherwise, his host of falsities fall without an enemy, self-discomfited and destroyed. But of this he never seems to have had the slightest apprehension. He falls to work, an artificer of fraud, against all the rules of architecture;—he lays his ornamental work first, and his massy foundation at the top of it; and thus his whole building tumbles upon his head. Other people look well to their ground, choose their position, and watch whether they are likely to be surprised there; but he, as if in the ostentation of his heart, builds upon a precipice, and encamps upon a mine, from choice. He seems to have no one actuating principle, but a steady, persevering resolution not to speak the truth or to tell the fact.

"It is impossible almost to treat conduct of this kind with perfect seriousness: yet I am aware that it ought to be more seriously accounted

for—because I am sure it has been a sort of paradox, which must have struck Your Lordships, how any person having so many motives to conceal—having so many reasons to dread detection—should yet go to work so clumsily upon the subject. It is possible, indeed, that it may raise this doubt—whether such a person is of sound mind enough to be a proper object of punishment; or at least it may give a kind of confused notion, that the guilt cannot be of so deep and black a grain, over which such a thin veil was thrown, and so little trouble taken to avoid detection. I am aware that, to account for this seeming paradox, historians, poets, and even philosophers—at least of ancient times—have adopted the superstitious solution of the vulgar, and said that the gods deprive men of reason whom they devote to destruction or to punishment. But to unassuming or unprejudiced reason, there is no need to resort to any supposed supernatural interference; for the solution will be found in the eternal rules that formed the mind of man, and gave a quality and nature to every passion that inhabits in it.

"An Honourable friend of mine, who is now, I believe, near me—a gentleman, to whom I never can on any occasion refer without feelings of respect, and, on this subject without feelings of the most grateful homage; a gentleman, whose abilities upon this occasion, as upon some former ones, happily for the glory of the age in which we live, are not entrusted merely to the perishable eloquence of the day, but will live to be the admiration of that hour when all of us are mute, and most of us forgotten;—that honourable gentleman has told you that Prudence, the first of virtues, never can be used in the cause of vice. If, reluctant and diffident, I might take such a liberty, I should express a doubt, whether experience, observation, or history, will warrant us in fully assenting to this observation. It is a noble and a lovely sentiment, my Lords, worthy the mind of him who uttered it, worthy that proud disdain, that generous scorn of the means and instruments of vice, which virtue and genius must ever feel. But I should doubt whether we can read the history of a Philip of Macedon, a Cæsar, or a Cromwell, without confessing, that there have been evil purposes, baneful to the peace and to the rights of men conducted—if I may not say, with prudence or with wisdom—yet with awful craft, and most successful and commanding subtlety. If, however, I might make a distinction, I should say that it is the proud attempt to mix a *variety* of lordly crimes, that unsettles the prudence of the mind, and breeds this distraction of the brain. *One* master-passion, domineering in the breast, may win the faculties of the understanding to advance its purpose, and to direct to that object every thing that thought or human knowledge can affect; but, to succeed, it must maintain a solitary despotism in the mind;—each rival profligacy must stand aloof, or wait in abject vassalage upon its throne. For, the Power that has not forbad the entrance of evil passions into man's mind, has at least forbad their union;—if they meet, they defeat their object, and their conquest or their attempt at it is tumult. Turn to the Virtues—how different the decree! Formed to connect, to blend, to associate, and to co-operate; bearing the same course, with kindred energies and harmonious sympathy, each perfect in its own lovely sphere, each moving in its wider or more contracted orbit, with different but concentering

powers, guided by the same influence of reason, and endeavouring at the same blessed end—the happiness of the individual, the harmony of the species, and the glory of the Creator. In the Vices, on the other hand, it is the discord that insures the defeat—each clamours to be heard in its own barbarous language; each claims the exclusive cunning of the brain: each thwarts and reproaches the other; and even while their fell rage assails with common hate the peace and virtue of the world, the civil war among their own tumultuous legions defeats the purpose of the foul conspiracy. These are the Furies of the mind, my Lords, that unsettle the understanding; these are the Furies, that destroy the virtue, Prudence,—while the distracted brain and shivered intellect proclaim the tumult that is within, and bear their testimonies, from the mouth of God himself, to the foul condition of the heart."

The part of the Speech which occupied the Third Day (and which was interrupted by the sudden indisposition of Mr. Sheridan) consists chiefly of comments upon the affidavits taken before Sir Elijah Impey,—in which the irrelevance and inconsistency of these documents is shrewdly exposed, and the dryness of detail, inseparable from such a task, enlivened by those light touches of conversational humour, and all that by-play of eloquence of which Mr. Sheridan was such a consummate master. But it was on the Fourth Day of the oration that he rose into his most ambitious flights, and produced some of those dazzling bursts of declamation, of which the traditional fame is most vividly preserved. Among the audience of that day was Gibbon, and the mention of his name in the following passage not only produced its effect at the moment, but, as connected with literary anecdote, will make the passage itself long memorable. Politics are of the day, but Literature is of all time—and, though it was in the power of the orator, in his brief moment of triumph, to throw a lustre over the historian by a passing epithet[1], the name of the latter will, at the long run, pay back the honour with interest. Having reprobated the violence and perfidy of the Governor-General, in forcing the Nabob to plunder his own relatives and friends, he adds:—

"I do say, that if you search the history of the world, you will not find an act of tyranny and fraud to surpass this; if you read all past histories, peruse the Annals of Tacitus, read the luminous page of Gibbon, and all the ancient or modern writers that have searched into the depravity of

[1] Gibbon himself thought it an event worthy of record in his Memoirs. "Before my departure from England (he says), I was present at the august spectacle of Mr. Hastings's trial in Westminster Hall. It is not my province to absolve or condemn the Governor of India; but Mr. Sheridan's eloquence demanded my applause; nor could I hear without emotion the personal compliment which he paid me in the presence of the British nation. From this display of genius, which blazed four successive days," etc. etc.

former ages to draw a lesson for the present, you will not find an act of treacherous, deliberate, cool cruelty that could exceed this."

On being asked by some honest brother Whig, at the conclusion of the Speech, how he came to compliment Gibbon with the epithet "luminous," Sheridan answered, in a half whisper, "I said '*voluminous*.'"

It is well known that the simile of the vulture and the lamb, which occurs in the address of Rolla to the Peruvians, had been previously employed by Mr. Sheridan, in this Speech; and it showed a degree of indifference to criticism,—which criticism, it must be owned, not unfrequently deserves,—to reproduce before the public an image, so notorious both from its application and its success. But, called upon, as he was, to levy, for the use of that Drama, a hasty conscription of phrases and images, all of a certain altitude and pomp, this veteran simile, he thought, might be pressed into the service among the rest. The passage of the Speech in which it occurs is left imperfect in the Report :—

"This is the character of all the protection ever afforded to the allies of Britain under the government of Mr. Hastings. They send their troops to drain the produce of industry, to seize all the treasures, wealth, and prosperity of the country, and then they call it Protection!—it is the protection of the vulture to the lamb.* * * * * * * * * *"

The following is his celebrated delineation of Filial Affection, to which reference is more frequently made than to any other part of the Speech;—though the gross inaccuracy of the printed Report has done its utmost to belie the reputation of the original passage, or rather has substituted a changeling to inherit its fame.

"When I see in many of these letters the infirmities of age made a subject of mockery and ridicule; when I see the feelings of a son treated by Mr. Middleton as puerile and contemptible; when I see an order given from Mr. Hastings to harden that son's heart, to choke the struggling nature in his bosom; when I see them pointing to the son's name and to his standard, while marching to oppress the mother, as to a banner that gives dignity, that gives a holy sanction and a reverence to their enterprise; when I see and hear these things done—when I hear them brought into three deliberate Defenses set up against the Charges of the Commons—my Lords, I own I grow puzzled and confounded, and almost begin to doubt whether, where such a defence can be offered, it may not be tolerated.

"And yet, my Lords, how can I support the claim of filial love by argument—much less the affection of a son to a mother—where love loses its awe, and veneration is mixed with tenderness? What can I say upon such a subject, what can I do but repeat the ready truths which, with the quick impulse of the mind, must spring to the lips of every man on such a theme? Filial Love! the morality of instinct, the sacrament of

nature and duty, or rather let me say, it is miscalled a duty, for it flows from the heart without effort, and is its delight, its indulgence, its enjoyment. It is guided not by the slow dictates of reason; it awaits not encouragement from reflection or from thought; it asks no aid of memory; it is an innate, but active, consciousness of having been the object of a thousand tender solicitudes, a thousand waking watchful cares, of meek anxiety and patient sacrifices, unremarked and unrequited by the object. It is a gratitude founded upon a conviction of obligations, not remembered; but the more binding because not remembered,—because conferred before the tender reason could acknowledge, or the infant memory record them—a gratitude and affection, which no circumstances should subdue, and which few can strengthen; a gratitude, in which even injury from the object, though it may blend regret, should never breed resentment; an affection which can be increased only by the decay of those to whom we owe it, and which is then most fervent when the tremulous voice of age, resistless in its feebleness, enquires for the natural protector of its cold decline.

"If these are the general sentiments of man, what must be their depravity, what must be their degeneracy, who can blot out and erase from the bosom the virtue that is deepest rooted in the human heart, and twined within the cords of life itself—aliens from nature, apostates from humanity! And yet, if there is a crime more fell, more foul—if there is any thing worse than a wilful persecutor of his mother—it is to see a deliberate, reasoning instigator and abettor to the deed;—this it is that shocks, disgusts, and appals the mind more than the other—to view, not a wilful parricide, but a parricide by compulsion, a miserable wretch, not actuated by the stubborn evils of his own worthless heart, not driven by the fury of his own distracted brain, but lending his sacrilegious hand, without any malice of his own, to answer the abandoned purposes of the human fiends that have subdued his will!—To condemn crimes like these, we need not talk of laws or of human rules—their foulness, their deformity does not depend upon local constitutions, upon human institutes or religious creeds:—they are crimes—and the persons who perpetuate them are monsters who violate the primitive condition, upon which the earth was given to man—they are guilty by the general verdict of human kind."

In some of the sarcasms we are reminded of the quaint contrasts of his dramatic style. Thus :—

"I must also do credit to them whenever I see any thing like lenity in Mr. Middleton or his agent:—they do seem to admit here, that it was not worth while to commit a massacre for the discount of a small note of hand, and to put two thousand women and children to death, in order to procure prompt payment."

Of the length to which the language of crimination was carried, as well by Mr. Sheridan as by Mr. Burke, one example, out of many, will suffice. It cannot fail, however, to be remarked that, while the denunciations and invectives of Burke are filled throughout with a passionate earnestness, which leaves no doubt as to the sin-

cerity of the hate and anger professed by him,—in Sheridan, whose nature was of a much gentler cast, the vehemence is evidently more in the words than in the feeling, the tone of indignation is theatrical and assumed, and the brightness of the flash seems to be more considered than the destructiveness of the fire:—

"It is this circumstance of deliberation and consciousness of his guilt—it is this that inflames the minds of those who watch his transactions, and roots out all pity for a person who could act under such an influence. We conceive of such tyrants as Caligula and Nero, bred up to tyranny and oppression, having had no equals to controul them—no moment for reflection—we conceive that, if it could have been possible to seize the guilty profligates for a moment, you might bring conviction to their hearts and repentance to their minds. But when you see a cool, reasoning, deliberate tyrant—one who was not born and bred to arrogance,—who has been nursed in a mercantile line—who has been used to look round among his fellow-subjects—to transact business with his equals—to account for conduct to his master, and, by that wise system of the Company, to detail all his transactions—who never could fly one moment from himself, but must be obliged every night to sit down and hold up a glass to his own soul—who could never be blind to his deformity; and who must have brought his conscience not only to connive at but to approve of it—*this* it is that distinguishes it from the worst cruelties, the worst enormities of those who, born to tyranny, and finding no superior, no adviser, have gone to the last presumption that there were none above to controul them hereafter. This is a circumstance that aggravates the whole of the guilt of the unfortunate gentleman we are now arraigning at your bar."

We now come to the Peroration, in which, skilfully and without appearance of design, it is contrived that the same sort of appeal to the purity of British justice, with which the oration opened, should, like the repetition of a solemn strain of music, recur at its close,—leaving in the minds of the Judges a composed and concentrated feeling of the great public duty they had to perform, in deciding upon the arraignment of guilt brought before them. The Court of Directors, it appeared, had ordered an enquiry into the conduct of the Begums, with a view to the restitution of their property, if it should appear that the charges against them were unfounded; but to this proceeding Mr. Hastings objected, on the ground that the Begums themselves had not called for such interference in their favour, and that it was inconsistent with the "Majesty of Justice" to condescend to volunteer her services. The pompous and jesuitical style in which this singular doctrine[1] is expressed, in a letter addressed by the Governor-General to Mr. Macpherson,

[1] "If nothing (says Mr. Mill) remained to stain the reputation of Mr. Hastings but the principles avowed in this singular pleading, his character, among the friends of justice, would be sufficiently determined."

is thus ingeniously turned to account by the orator, in winding up his masterly statement to a close :—

"And now before I come to the last magnificent paragraph, let me call the attention of those who, possibly, think themselves capable of judging of the dignity and character of justice in this country ;—let me call the attention of those who, arrogantly perhaps presume that they understand what the features, what the duties of justice are here and in India ;—let them learn a lesson from this great statesman, this enlarged, this liberal philosopher :—'I hope I shall not depart from the simplicity of official language in saying, that the Majesty of Justice ought to be approached with solicitation, not descend to provoke or invite it, much less to debase itself by the suggestion of wrongs and the promise of redress, with the denunciation of punishment before trial, and even before accusation.' This is the exhortation which Mr. Hastings makes to his Counsel. This is the character which he gives of British justice.

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"But I will ask Your Lordships, do you approve this representation? Do you feel that this is the true image of justice! Is this the character of British Justice? Are these her features? Is this her countenance? Is this her gait or her mien? No, I think even now I hear you calling upon me to turn from this vile libel, this base caricature, this Indian pagod, formed by the hand of guilty and knavish tyranny, to dupe the heart of ignorance,—to turn from this deformed idol to the true Majesty of Justice here. *Here*, indeed, I see a different form, enthroned by the sovereign hand of Freedom,—awful without severity—commanding without pride—vigilant and active without restlessness or suspicion—searching and inquisitive without meanness or debasement—not arrogantly scorning to stoop to the voice of afflicted innocence, and in its loveliest attitude when bending to uplift the suppliant at its feet.

"It is by the majesty, by the form of that Justice, that I do conjure and implore Your Lordships to give your minds to this great business; that I exhort you to look, not so much to words which may be denied or quibbled away, but to the plain facts,—to weigh and consider the testimony in your own minds: we know the result must be inevitable. Let the truth appear and our cause is gained. It is this, I conjure Your Lordships, for your own honour, for the honour of the nation, for the honour of human nature, now entrusted to your care,—it is this duty that the Commons of England, speaking through us, claims at your hands.

"They exhort you to it by every thing that calls sublimely upon the heart of man, by the Majesty of that Justice which this bold man has libelled, by the wide fame of your own tribunal, by the sacred pledge by which you swear in the solemn hour of decision, knowing that that decision will then bring you the highest reward that ever blessed the heart of man, the consciousness of having done the greatest act of mercy for the world, that the earth has ever yet received from any hand but Heaven.—My Lords, I have done."

Though I have selected some of the most remarkable passages of this Speech[1], it would be unfair to judge of it even from these spe-

[1] I had selected many more, but must confess that they appeared to me, when

cimens. A Report, *verbatim*, of any effective speech must always appear diffuse and ungraceful in the perusal. The very repetitions, the redundancy, the accumulation of epithets, which gave force and momentum in the career of delivery, but weaken and encumber the march of the style, when read. There is, indeed, the same sort of difference between a faithful short-hand Report, and those abridged and polished records which Burke has left us of his speeches, as there is between a cast taken directly from the face, (where every line is accurately preserved, but all the blemishes and excrescences are in rigid preservation also,) and a model, over which the correcting hand has passed, and all that was minute or superfluous is generalised and softened away.

Neither was it in such rhetorical passages as abound, perhaps, rather lavishly, in this Speech, that the chief strength of Mr. Sheridan's talent lay. Good sense and wit were the great weapons of his oratory—shrewdness in detecting the weak points of an adversary, and infinite powers of raillery in exposing it. These were faculties which he possessed in a greater degree than any of his contemporaries; and so well did he himself know the strong hold of his powers, that it was but rarely, after this display in Westminster Hall, that he was tempted to leave it for the higher flights of oratory, or to wander after Sense into that region of metaphor, where too often, like Angelica in the enchanted palace of Atlante, she is sought for in vain [1]. His attempts, indeed, at the florid or figurative style, whether in his speeches or his writings, were seldom very successful. That luxuriance of fancy, which in Burke was natural and indigenous, was in him rather a forced and exotic growth. It is a remarkable proof of this difference between them, that while, in the memorandums of speeches left behind by Burke, we find, that the points of argument and business were those which he prepared, trusting to the ever ready wardrobe of his fancy for their

in print, so little worthy of the reputation of the Speech, that I thought, it would be, on the whole, more prudent to omit them. Even of the passages here cited, I speak rather from my imagination of what they must have been, than from my actual feeling of what they are. The character given of such Reports by Lord Loughborough, is, no doubt, but too just. On a motion made by Lord Stanhope, (April 29, 1794,) that the short-hand writers employed on Hastings's trial, should be summoned to the bar of the House, to read their minutes, Lord Loughborough, in the course of his observations on the motion said, "God forbid that ever their Lordships should call on the short-hand writers to publish their notes:—for, of all people, short-hand writers were ever the farthest from correctness, and there were no man's words they ever heard that they again returned. They were in general ignorant, as acting mechanically; and by not considering the antecedent, and catching the sound, and not the sense, they perverted the sense of the speaker, and made him appear as ignorant as themselves."

[1] Curran used to say laughingly, "When I can't talk sense, I talk metaphor."

adornment,—in Mr. Sheridan's notes it is chiefly the decorative passages, that are worked up beforehand to their full polish; while on the resources of his good sense, ingenuity, and temper, he seems to have relied for the management of his reasonings and facts. Hence naturally it arises that the images of Burke, being called up on the instant, like spirits, to perform the bidding of his argument, minister to it throughout, with an almost co-ordinate agency: while the figurative fancies of Sheridan, already prepared for the occasion, and brought forth to adorn, not assist, the business of the discourse, resemble rather those sprites which the magicians used to keep inclosed in phials, to be produced for a momentary enchantment, and then shut up again.

In truth, the similes and illustrations of Burke form such an intimate, and often essential, part of his reasoning, that if the whole strength of the Samson does not lie in those luxuriant locks, it would at least be considerably diminished by their loss. Whereas, in the Speech of Mr. Sheridan, which we have just been considering, there is hardly one of the rhetorical ornaments that might not be detached, without, in any great degree, injuring the force of the general statement. Another consequence of this difference between them is observable in their respective modes of transition, from what may be called the *business* of a speech to its more generalised and rhetorical parts. When Sheridan rises, his elevation is not sufficiently prepared; he starts abruptly and at once from the level of his statement, and sinks down into it again with the same suddenness. But Burke, whose imagination never allows even business to subside into mere prose, sustains a pitch throughout which accustoms the mind to wonder, and, while it prepares us to accompany him in his boldest flights, makes us, even when he walks, still feel that he has wings:—

"*Même quand l'oiseau marche, on sent qu'il a des ailes.*"

The sincerity of the praises bestowed by Burke on the Speech of his brother Manager has sometimes been questioned, but upon no sufficient grounds. His zeal for the success of the Impeachment, no doubt, had a considerable share in the enthusiasm with which this great effort in its favour filled him. It may be granted, too, that, in admiring the apostrophes that variegate this speech, he was, in some degree, enamoured of a reflection of himself;

"*Cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse.*"

He sees reflected there, in fainter light,
All that combines to make himself so bright.

But whatever mixture of other motives there may have been in

the feeling, it is certain that his admiration of the Speech was real and unbounded. He is said to have exclaimed to Mr. Fox, during the delivery of some passages of it, "There,—that is the true style:—something between poetry and prose, and better than either." The severer taste of Mr. Fox dissented, as might be expected, from this remark. He replied, that "he thought such a mixture was for the advantage of neither—as producing poetic prose, or, still worse, prosaic poetry." It was, indeed, the opinion of Mr. Fox, that the impression made upon Burke by these somewhat too theatrical tirades is observable in the change that subsequently took place in his own style of writing; and that the florid and less chastened taste, which some persons discover in his later productions, may all be traced to the example of this speech. However this may be, or whether there is really much difference, as to taste, between the youthful and sparkling vision of the Queen of France in 1792, and the interview between the Angel and Lord Bathurst in 1775, it is surely a most unjust disparagement of the eloquence of Burke, to apply to it, at any time of his life, the epithet "flowery,"—a designation only applicable to that ordinary ambition of style, whose chief display, by necessity, consists of ornament without thought, and pomp without substance. A succession of bright images, clothed in simple, transparent language,—even when, as in Burke, they "crowd upon the aching sense" too dazzlingly,—should never be confounded with that mere verbal opulence of style, which mistakes the glare of words for the glitter of ideas, and, like the Helen of the sculptor Lysippus, makes finery supply the place of beauty. The figurative definition of eloquence in the Book of Proverbs—"Apples of gold in a net-work of silver"—is peculiarly applicable to that enshrinement of rich, solid thoughts in clear and shining language, which is the triumph of the imaginative class of writers and orators,—while, perhaps, the network, *without* the gold inclosed, is a type equally significant of what is called "flowery" eloquence.

It is also, I think, a mistake, however flattering to my country, to call the School of Oratory, to which Burke belongs, *Irish*. That Irishmen are naturally more gifted with those stores of fancy, from which the illumination of this high order of the art must be supplied, the names of Burke, Grattan, Sheridan, Curran, Canning, and Plunkett, abundantly testify. Yet had Lord Chatham, before any of these great speakers were heard, led the way, in the same animated and figured strain of oratory [1]; while another Englishman,

[1] His few noble sentences on the privilege of the poor man's cottage are universally known. There is also his fanciful allusion to the confluence of the Saone and the Rhone, the traditional reports of which vary, both as to the exact terms

Lord Bacon, by making Fancy the handmaid of Philosophy, had long since set an example of that union of the imaginative and the solid, which, both in writing and in speaking, forms the characteristic distinction of this school.

The Speech of Mr. Sheridan in Westminster Hall, though so much inferior, in the opinion of Mr. Fox and others, to that which he had delivered on the same subject in the House of Commons, seems to have produced, at the time, even a more lively and general sensation;—possibly from the nature and numerousness of the assembly before which it was spoken, and which counted among its multitude a number of that sex, whose lips are in general found to be the most rapid conductors of fame. But there was *one* of this sex, more immediately interested in his glory, who seems to have felt it, as women alone can feel. "I have delayed writing," says Mrs. Sheridan, in a letter to her sister-in-law, dated four days after the termination of the Speech, "till I could gratify myself and you by sending you the news of our dear Dick's triumph! — of *our* triumph I may call it; for, surely, no one, in the slightest degree connected with him, but must feel proud and happy. It is impossible, my dear woman, to convey to you the delight, the astonishment, the adoration, he has excited in the breasts of every class of people! Every party-prejudice has been overcome by a display of genius, eloquence, and goodness, which no one, with any thing like a heart about them, could have listened to, without being the wiser and the better for the rest of their lives. What must *my* feelings be?—you only can imagine. To tell you the truth, it is with some difficulty that I can 'let down my mind,' as Mr. Burke said afterwards, to talk or think on any other subject. But pleasure, too exquisite, becomes pain, and I am at this moment suffering for the delightful anxieties of last week."

It is a most happy combination when the wife of a man of genius unites intellect enough to appreciate the talents of her husband, with the quick, feminine sensibility that can thus passionately feel his success. Pliny tells us, that his Calpurnia, whenever he pleaded an important cause, had messengers ready to report to her every murmur of applause that he received; and the poet Statius, in alluding to his own victories at the Albanian Games, mentions the

in which it was expressed, and the persons to whom he applied it. Even Lord Orford does not seem to have ascertained the latter point. To these may be added the following specimen:—"I don't inquire from what quarter the wind cometh, but whither it goeth; and, if any measure that comes from the Right Honourable Gentleman tends to the public good, my bark is ready." Of a different kind is that grand passage,—"America, they tell me, has resisted—I rejoice to hear it," —which Mr. Grattan used to pronounce finer than any thing in Demosthenes.

"breathless kisses" with which his wife, Claudia, used to cover the triumphal garlands he brought home. Mrs. Sheridan may well take her place beside these Roman wives;—and she had another resemblance to one of them, which was no less womanly and attractive. Not only did Calpurnia sympathise with the glory of her husband abroad, but she could also, like Mrs. Sheridan, add a charm to his talents at home, by setting his verses to music and singing them to her harp,—"with no instructor," adds Pliny, "but Love, who is, after all, the best master."

This letter of Mrs. Sheridan thus proceeds:—

"You were perhaps alarmed by the accounts of S.'s illness in the papers: but I have the pleasure to assure you he is now perfectly well, and I hope by next week we shall be quietly settled in the country, and suffered to repose, in every sense of the word; for indeed we have, both of us, been in a constant state of agitation, of one kind or another, for some time back.

"I am very glad to hear your father continues so well. Surely he must feel happy and proud of such a son. I take it for granted you see the newspapers: I assure you the accounts in them are not exaggerated, and only echo the exclamation of admiration that is in every body's mouth. I make no excuse for dwelling on this subject:—I know you will not find it tedious. God bless you:—I am an invalid at present, and not able to write long letters."

The agitation and want of repose, which Mrs. Sheridan here complains of, arose not only from the anxiety which she so deeply felt, for the success of this great public effort of her husband, but from the share which she herself had taken, in the labour and attention necessary to prepare him for it. The mind of Sheridan being, from the circumstances of his education and life, but scantily informed upon all subjects for which reading is necessary, required, of course, considerable training and feeding, before it could venture to grapple with any new or important task. He has been known to say frankly to his political friends, when invited to take part in some question that depended upon authorities, "You know I'm an ignoramus—but here I am—instruct me, and I'll do my best." It is said, that the stock of numerical lore, upon which he ventured to set up as the Aristarchus of Mr. Pitt's financial plans, was the result of three weeks' hard study of arithmetic, to which he doomed himself, in the early part of his Parliamentary career, on the chance of being appointed, some time or other, Chancellor of the Exchequer. For financial display it must be owned that this was rather a crude preparation. But there are other subjects of oratory, on which the outpourings of information, newly acquired, may have a freshness and vivacity which it would be vain to expect, in the communication of knowledge that has lain long in the mind, and lost in circumstantial

spirit what it has gained in general mellowness. They, indeed, who have been regularly disciplined in learning, may be not only too familiar with what they know to communicate it with much liveliness to others, but too apt also to rely upon the resources of the memory, and upon those cold outlines which it retains of knowledge whose details are faded. The natural consequence of all this is that persons, the best furnished with general information, are often the most vague and unimpressive on particular subjects; while, on the contrary, an uninstructed man of genius, like Sheridan, who approaches a topic of importance for the first time, has not only the stimulus of ambition and curiosity to aid him in mastering its details, but the novelty of first impressions to brighten his general views of it—and, with a fancy thus freshly excited, himself, is most sure to touch and rouse the imaginations of others.

This was particularly the situation of Mr. Sheridan with respect to the history of Indian affairs; and there remain among his papers numerous proofs of the labour which his preparation for this arduous task cost not only himself but Mrs. Sheridan. Among others, there is a large pamphlet of Mr. Hastings, consisting of more than two hundred pages, copied out neatly in her writing, with some assistance from another female hand. The industry, indeed, of all around him was put in requisition for this great occasion—some, busy with the pen and scissors, making extracts—some, pasting and stitching his scattered memorandums in their places. So that there was hardly a single member of the family that could not boast of having contributed his share, to the mechanical construction of this speech. The pride of its success was, of course, equally participated; and Edwards, a favourite servant of Mr. Sheridan, who lived with him many years, was long celebrated for his professed imitation of the manner in which his master delivered (what seems to have struck Edwards as the finest part of the speech) his closing words, "My Lords, I have done!"

The Impeachment of Warren Hastings is one of those pageants in the drama of public life, which show how fleeting are the labours and triumphs of politicians—"what shadows they are, and what shadows they pursue." When we consider the importance which the great actors in that scene attached to it,—the grandeur with which their eloquence invested the cause, as one in which the liberties and rights of the whole human race were interested,—and then think how all that splendid array of Law and of talent has dwindled away, in the view of most persons at present, into an unworthy and harassing persecution of a meritorious and successful statesman;—how those passionate appeals to justice, those vehement denunciations of crime, which made the halls of Westminster and St. Stephen's ring

with their echoes, are now coldly judged, through the medium of disfiguring Reports, and regarded, at the best, but as rhetorical effusions, indebted to temper for their warmth, and to fancy for their details;—while so little was the reputation of the delinquent himself even scorched by the bolts of eloquence thus launched at him, that a subsequent House of Commons thought themselves honoured by his presence, and welcomed him with such cheers [1] as should reward only the friends and benefactors of freedom;—when we reflect on this thankless result of so much labour and talent, it seems wonderful that there should still be found high and gifted spirits, to waste themselves away in such temporary struggles, and, like that spendthrift of genius, Sheridan, to discount their immortality, for the payment of fame in hand which these triumphs of the day secure to them.

For this direction, however, which the current of opinion has taken, with regard to Mr. Hastings and his eloquent accusers, there are many very obvious reasons to be assigned. Success, as I have already remarked, was the dazzling talisman, which he waved in the eyes of his adversaries from the first, and which his friends have made use of to throw a splendour over his tyranny and injustice ever since [2]. Too often, in the moral logic of this world, it matters but little what the premises of conduct may be, so the conclusion turns out showy and prosperous. There is also, it must be owned, among the English (as perhaps, among all free people), a strong taste for the arbitrary, when they themselves are not to be the victims of it, which invariably secures to such accomplished despotisms as that of Lord Strafford in Ireland, and Hastings in India, even a larger share of their admiration than they are, themselves, always willing to allow.

The rhetorical exaggerations, in which the Managers of the prosecution indulged,—Mr. Sheridan, from imagination, luxuriating in its own display, and Burke from the same cause, added to his overpowering autocracy of temper—were but too much calculated to throw suspicion on the cause in which they were employed, and

[1] When called as a witness before the House, in 1813, on the subject of the renewal of the East India Company's Charter.

[2] In the important article of Finance, however, for which he made so many sacrifices of humanity, even the justification of success was wanting to his measures. The following is the account given by the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1810, of the state in which India was left by his administration:—"The revenues had been absorbed; the pay and allowances of both the civil and military branches of the service were greatly in arrear; the credit of the Company was extremely depressed; and, added to all, the whole system had fallen into such irregularity and confusion, that the real state of affairs could not be *ascertained* till the conclusion of the year 1785-6."—*Third Report.*

to produce a re-action in favour of the person whom they were meant to overwhelm. "*Rogo vos, Judices*," — Mr. Hastings might well have said, — "*si iste disertus est, ideo me damnari oportet*[1]?"

There are also, without doubt, considerable allowances to be made, for the difficult situations in which Mr. Hastings was placed, and those impulses to wrong which acted upon him from all sides —allowances which will have more or less weight with the judgment, according as it may be more or less fastidiously disposed, in letting excuses for rapine and oppression pass muster. The incessant and urgent demands of the Directors upon him for money may palliate, perhaps, the violence of those methods which he took to procure it for them; and the obstruction to his policy which would have arisen from a strict observance of Treaties, may be admitted, by the same gentle casuistry, as an apology for his frequent infractions of them.

Another consideration to be taken into account, in our estimate of the character of Mr. Hastings as a ruler, is that strong light of publicity, which the practice in India of carrying on the business of government by written documents threw on all the machinery of his measures, deliberative as well as executive. These Minutes, indeed, form a record of fluctuation and inconsistency—not only on the part of the Governor-General, but of all the members of the government—a sort of weather-cock diary of opinions and principles, shifting with the interests or convenience of the moment[2], which entirely takes away our respect even for success, when issuing out of such a chaos of self-contradiction and shuffling. It cannot be denied, however, that such a system of exposure—submitted, as it was in this case, to still further scrutiny, under the bold, denuding hands of a Burke and a Sheridan—was a test to which the councils of few rulers could with impunity be brought. Where, indeed, is

[1] Seneca, Controvers. lib. iii. c. 19.

[2] Instances of this, on the part of Mr. Hastings, are numberless. In remarking upon his corrupt transfer of the management of the Nabob's household in 1778, the Directors say, "It is with equal surprise and concern that we observe this request introduced, and the Nabob's ostensible rights so solemnly asserted at this period by our Governor-General; because, on a late occasion, to serve a very different purpose, he has not scrupled to declare it as visible as the light of the sun, that the Nabob is a mere pageant, and without even the shadow of authority." On another transaction in 1781, Mr. Mill remarks;—"It is a curious moral spectacle to compare the minutes and letters of the Governor-General, when, at the beginning of the year 1780, maintaining the propriety of condemning the Nabob to sustain the whole of the burden imposed upon him, and his minutes and letters maintaining the propriety of relieving him from those burthens in 1781. The arguments and facts adduced on the one occasion, as well as the conclusion, are a flat contradiction to those exhibited on the other."

the statesman that could bear to have his obliquities thus chronicled? or where is the Cabinet that would not shrink from such an inroad of light into its recesses?

The undefined nature, too, of that power which the Company exercised in India, and the uncertain state of Law vibrating between the English and Hindoo codes, left such tempting openings for injustice as it was hardly possible to resist. With no public opinion to warn off authority from encroachment, and with the precedents set up by former rulers, all pointing the wrong way, it would have been difficult, perhaps, for even more moderate men than Hastings, not occasionally to break bounds and go continually astray.

To all these considerations in his favour is to be added the apparently triumphant fact, that his government was popular among the natives of India, and that his name is still remembered by them with gratitude and respect.

Allowing Mr. Hastings, however, the full advantage of these and other strong pleas in his defence, it is yet impossible, for any real lover of justice and humanity, to read the plainest and least exaggerated history of his government [1], without feeling deep indignation excited at almost every page of it. His predecessors had, it is true, been guilty of wrongs as glaring—the treachery of Lord Clive to Omichund in 1757, and the abandonment of Ramnarain to Meer Causim under the administration of Mr. Vansittart, are stains upon the British character which no talents or glory can do away. There are precedents, indeed, to be found, through the annals of our Indian empire, for the formation of the most perfect code of tyranny, in every department, legislative, judicial, and executive, that ever entered into the dreams of intoxicated power. But, while the practice of Mr. Hastings was, at least, as tyrannical as that of his predecessors, the principles upon which he founded that practice were still more odious and unpardonable. In his manner, indeed, of defending himself he is his own worst accuser—as there is no outrage of power, no violation of faith, that might not be justified by the versatile and ambidextrous doctrines, the lessons of deceit and rules

[1] Nothing can be more partial and misleading than the colouring given to these transactions by Mr. Nicholls and other apologists of Hastings. For the view which I have myself taken of the whole case I am chiefly indebted to the able History of British India by Mr. Mill—whose industrious research and clear analytical statements make him the most valuable authority that can be consulted on the subject.

The mood of mind in which Mr. Nicholls listened to the proceedings of the Impeachment may be judged from the following declaration, which he has had the courage to promulgate to the public:—"On this Charge (the Begum Charge) Mr. Sheridan made a speech which both sides of the House professed greatly to admire—for Mr. Pitt now openly approved of the Impeachment. *I will acknowledge, that I did not admire this speech of Mr. Sheridan.*"

of rapine, which he so ably illustrated by his measures, and has so shamelessly recorded with his pen.

Nothing but an early and deep initiation in the corrupting school of Indian politics could have produced the facility with which, as occasion required, he could belie his own recorded assertions, turn hostilely round upon his own expressed opinions, disclaim the proxies which he himself had delegated, and, in short, get rid of all the inconveniences of personal identity, by never acknowledging himself to be bound by any engagement or opinion which himself had formed. To select the worst features of his Administration is no very easy task; but the calculating cruelty with which he abetted the extermination of the Rohillas — his unjust and precipitate execution of Nuncomar, who had stood forth as his accuser, and, therefore, became his victim, — his violent aggression upon the Rajah of Benares, and that combination of public and private rapacity, which is exhibited in the details of his conduct to the royal family of Oude;—these are acts, proved by the testimony of himself and his accomplices, from the disgrace of which no formal acquittal upon points of law can absolve him, and whose guilt the allowances of charity may extenuate, but never can remove. That the perpetrator of such deeds should have been popular among the natives of India only proves how low was the standard of justice, to which the entire tenor of our policy had accustomed them;—but that a ruler of this character should be held up to admiration in England, is one of those anomalies with which England, more than any other nation, abounds, and only inclines us to wonder that the true worship of Liberty should so long have continued to flourish in a country, where such heresies to her sacred cause are found.

I have dwelt so long upon the circumstances and nature of this Trial, not only on account of the conspicuous place which it occupies in the fore-ground of Mr. Sheridan's life, but because of that general interest which an observer of our Institutions must take in it, from the clearness with which it brought into view some of their best and worst features. While, on one side, we perceive the weight of the popular scale, in the lead taken, upon an occasion of such solemnity and importance, by two persons brought forward from the middle ranks of society into the very van of political distinction and influence, on the other hand, in the sympathy and favour extended by the Court to the practical assertor of despotic principles, we trace the prevalence of that feeling which, since the commencement of the late King's reign, has made the Throne the rallying point of all that are unfriendly to the cause of freedom. Again, in considering the conduct of the Crown Lawyers during the Trial—the narrow and irrational rules of evidence which they sought to esta-

blish—the unconstitutional control assumed by the Judges, over the decisions of the tribunal before which the cause was tried, and the refusal to communicate the reasons upon which those decisions were founded—above all, too, the legal opinions expressed on the great question relative to the abatement of an Impeachment by Dissolution, in which almost the whole body of lawyers [1] took the wrong, the pedantic, and the unstatesman-like side of the question;—while in all these indications of the spirit of that profession, and of its propensity to tie down the giant, Truth, with its small threads of technicality and precedent, we perceive the danger to be apprehended from the interference of such a spirit in politics; on the other side, arrayed against these petty tactics of the Forum, we see the broad banner of Constitutional Law, upheld alike by a Fox and a Pitt, a Sheridan and a Dundas, and find truth and good sense taking refuge from the equivocations of lawyers, in such consoling documents as the Report upon the Abuses of the Trial by Burke—a document which, if ever a reform of the English law should be attempted, will stand as a great guiding light to the adventurers in that heroic entreprise.

It has been frequently asserted, that on the evening of Mr. Sheridan's grand display in the House of Commons, The School for Scandal and The Duenna were acted at Covent-Garden and Drury-Lane, and thus three great audiences were at the same moment amused, agitated, and, as it were, wielded by the intellect of one man. As this triple triumph of talent—this manifestation of the power of Genius to multiply itself, like an Indian god—was, in the instance of Sheridan, not only possible, but within the scope of a very easy arrangement, it is to be lamented that no such coincidence did actually take place, and that the ability to have achieved the miracle is all that can be with truth attributed to him. From a careful examination of the play-bills of the different theatres during this period, I have ascertained, with regret, that neither on the evening of the speech in the House of Commons, nor on any of the days of the oration in Westminster Hall, was there either at Covent-Garden, Drury-Lane, or Haymarket theatres, any piece whatever of Mr. Sheridan's acted.

The following passages of a letter from Miss Sheridan to her sister in Ireland, written while on a visit with her brother in London,

[1] Among the rest, Lord Erskine, who allowed his profession, on this occasion, to stand in the light of his judgment. "As to a Nisi-prius lawyer (said Burke) giving an opinion on the duration of an Impeachment—as well might a rabbit, that breeds six times a year, pretend to know any thing of the gestation of an elephant!"

though referring to a later period of the Trial, may without impropriety be inserted here :—

"Just as I received your letter yesterday, I was setting out for the trial with Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Dixon. I was fortunate in my day, as I heard all the principal speakers—Mr. Burke I admired the least—Mr. Fox very much indeed. The subject, in itself, was not particularly interesting, as the debate turned merely on a point of law, but the earnestness of his manner and the amazing precision with which he conveys his ideas is truly delightful. And last, not least, I heard my brother! I cannot express to you the sensation of pleasure and pride that filled my heart at the moment he rose. Had I never seen him or heard his name before, I should have conceived him the first man among them at once. There is a dignity and grace in his countenance and deportment, very striking—at the same time that one cannot trace the smallest degree of conscious superiority in his manner. His voice, too, appeared to me extremely fine. The speech itself was not much calculated to display the talents of an orator, as of course it related only to dry matter. You may suppose I am not so lavish of praises before indifferent persons, but I am sure you will acquit me of partiality in what I have said. When they left the Hall we walked about some time, and were joined by several of the managers—among the rest by Mr. Burke, whom we set down at his own house. They seem now to have better hopes of the business than they have had for some time; as the point urged with so much force and apparent success relates to very material evidence which the Lords have refused to hear, but which, once produced, must prove strongly against Mr. Hastings; and from what passed yesterday they think their Lordships must yield.—We sat in the King's box," etc

CHAPTER XII.

Death of Mr. Sheridan's Father.—Verses by Mrs. Sheridan on the death of her sister, Mrs. Tickell.

In the summer of this year the father of Mr. Sheridan died. He had been recommended to try the air of Lisbon for his health, and had left Dublin for that purpose, accompanied by his younger daughter. But the rapid increase of his malady prevented him from proceeding farther than Margate, where he died about the beginning of August, attended in his last moments by his son Richard.

We have seen with what harshness, to use no stronger term, Mr. Sheridan was for many years treated by his father, and how persevering and affectionate were the efforts, in spite of many capricious repulses, that he made to be restored to forgiveness and favour. In his happiest moments, both of love and fame, the thought of being excluded from the paternal roof came across him with a chill that seemed to sadden all his triumph[1]. When it is

[1] See the letter written by him immediately after his marriage, page 56, and the anecdote in page 78.

considered, too, that the father, to whom he felt thus amiably, had never distinguished him by any particular kindness, but, on the contrary, had always shown a marked preference for the disposition and abilities of his brother Charles—it is impossible not to acknowledge, in such true filial affection, a proof that talent was not the only ornament of Sheridan, and that, however unfavorably to moral culture was the life that he led, Nature in forming his mind, had implanted there virtue as well as genius.

Of the tender attention which he paid to his father on his death-bed, I am enabled to lay before the reader no less a testimony than the letters written at the time by Miss Sheridan, who as I have already said, accompanied the old gentleman from Ireland, and now shared with her brother the task of comforting his last moments. And here it is difficult even for contempt to keep down the indignation, that one cannot but feel at those slanderers, under the name of biographers, who, calling in malice to the aid of their ignorance, have not scrupled to assert that the father of Sheridan died unattended by any of his nearest relatives! — Such are ever the marks that Dulness leaves behind, in its Gothic irruptions into the sanctuary of departed Genius—defacing what it cannot understand, polluting what it has not the soul to reverence, and taking revenge for its own darkness by the wanton profanation of all that is sacred in the eyes of others.

Immediately on the death of their father, Sheridan removed his sister to Deepden—a seat of the Duke of Norfolk in Surrey, which His Grace had lately lent him—and then returned, himself, to Margate, to pay the last tribute to his father's remains. The letters of Miss Sheridan are addressed to her elder sister in Ireland, and the first, which I shall give entire, was written a day or two after her arrival at Deepden.

"My Dear Love, *Dibden, August* 18.

"Though you have ever been uppermost in my thoughts, yet it has not been in my power to write since the few lines I sent from Margate. I hope this will find you, in some degree, recovered from the shock you must have experienced from the late melancholy event. I trust to your own piety and the tenderness of your worthy husband, for procuring you such a degree of calmness of mind as may secure your health from injury. In the midst of what I have suffered I have been thankful that you did not share a scene of distress which you could not have relieved. I have supported myself, but I am sure, had we been together, we should have suffered more.

"With regard to my brother's kindness, I can scarcely express to you how great it has been. He saw my father while he was still sensible, and never quitted him till the awful moment was past.—I will not now dwell

on particulars. My mind is not sufficiently recovered to enter on the subject, and you could only be distressed by it. He returns soon to Margate to pay the last duties in the manner desired by my father. His feelings have been severely tried, and earnestly I pray he may not suffer from that cause, or from the fatigue he has endured. His tenderness to me I never can forget. I had so little claim on him, that I still feel a degree of surprise mixed with my gratitude. Mrs. Sheridan's reception of me was truly affectionate. They leave me to myself now as much as I please, as I had gone through so much fatigue of body and mind that I require some rest. I have not, as you may suppose, looked much beyond the present hour, but I begin to be more composed. I could now enjoy your society, and I wish for it hourly. I should think I may hope to see you sooner in England than you had intended; but you will write to me very soon, and let me know every thing that concerns you. I know not whether you will feel like me a melancholy pleasure in the reflection that my father received the last kind offices from my brother Richard[1], whose conduct on this occasion must convince every one of the goodness of his heart and the truth of his filial affection. One more reflection of consolation is, that nothing was omitted that could have prolonged his life or eased his latter hours. God bless and preserve you, my dear love. I shall soon write more to you, but shall for a short time suspend my journal, as still too many painful thoughts will crowd upon me to suffer me to regain such a frame of mind as I should wish when I write to you.

"Ever affectionately your

"E. Sheridan."

In another letter, dated a few days after, she gives an account of the domestic life of Mrs. Sheridan, which, like every thing that is related of that most interesting woman, excites a feeling towards her memory little short of love.

"My Dear Love, *Dibden, Friday*, 22.

"I shall endeavour to resume my journal, though my anxiety to hear from you occupies my mind in a way that unfits me for writing. I have been here almost a week in perfect quiet. While there was company in the house, I stayed in my room, and since my brother's leaving us to go to Margate, I have sat at times with Mrs. Sheridan, who is kind and considerate; so that I have entire liberty. Her poor sister's[2] children are all with her. The girl gives her constant employment, and seems to profit by being under so good an instructor. Their father was here for some days, but I did not see him. Last night Mrs. S. showed me a picture of

[1] In a letter, from which I have given an extract in the early part of this work, written by the elder sister of Sheridan a short time after his death, in referring to the differences that existed between him and his father, she says—"and yet it was that son, and not the object of his partial fondness, who at last closed his eyes." It generally happens that the injustice of such partialities is revenged by the ingratitude of those who are the objects of them; and the present instance, as there is but too much reason to believe, was not altogether an exception to the remark.

[2] Mrs. Tickell

Mrs. Tickell, which she wears round her neck. The thing was misrepresented to you:—it was not done after her death, but a short time before it. The sketch was taken while she slept, by a painter at Bristol. This Mrs. Sheridan got copied by Cosway, who has softened down the traces of illness in such a way that the picture conveys no gloomy idea. It represents her in a sweet sleep, which must have been soothing to her friend, after seeing her for a length of time in a state of constant suffering.

"My brother left us Wednesday morning, and we do not expect him to return for some days. He meant only to stay at Margate long enough to attend the last melancholy office, which it was my poor father's express desire should be performed in whatever parish he died.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

"*Sunday.*

"Dick is still in town, and we do not expect him for some time. Mrs. Sheridan seems now quite reconciled to these little absences, which she knows are unavoidable. I never saw any one so constant in employing every moment of her time, and to that I attribute, in a great measure, the recovery of her health and spirits. The education of her niece, her music, books, and work, occupy every minute of the day. After dinner, the children, who call her "Mamma-aunt," spend some time with us, and her manner to them is truly delightful. The girl, you know, is the eldest. The eldest boy is about five years old, very like his father, but extremely gentle in his manners. The youngest is past three. The whole set then retire to the music-room. As yet I cannot enjoy their parties;—a song from Mrs. Sheridan affected me last night in a most painful manner. I shall not try the experiment soon again. Mrs. S. blamed herself for putting me to the trial, and, after tea, got a book, which she read to us till supper. This, I find, is the general way of passing the evening.

"They are now at their music, and I have retired to add a few lines. This day has been more gloomy than we have been for some days past;—it is the first day of our getting into mourning. All the servants in deep mourning made a melancholy appearance, and I found it very difficult to sit out the dinner. But, as I have dined below since there has been only Mrs. Sheridan and Miss Linley here, I would not suffer a circumstance, to which I must accustom myself, to break in on their comfort."

These children, to whom Mrs. Sheridan thus wholly devoted herself, and continued to do so for the remainder of her life, had lost their mother, Mrs. Tickell, in the year 1787, by the same complaint that afterwards proved fatal to their aunt. The passionate attachment of Mrs. Sheridan to this sister, and the deep grief with which she mourned her loss, are expressed in a poem of her own so touchingly, that, to those who love the language of real feeling, I need not apologise for their introduction here. Poetry, in general, is but a cold interpreter of sorrow; and the more it displays its skill, as an art, the less is it likely to do justice to nature. In writing these verses, however, the workmanship was forgotten in the

subject; and the critic, to feel them as he ought, should forget his own craft in reading them.

" *Written in the Spring of the Year* 1788.

" The hours and days pass on;—sweet Spring returns,
And whispers comfort to the heart that mourns;
But not to mine, whose dear and cherish'd grief
Asks for indulgence, but ne'er hopes relief.
For, ah! can changing seasons e'er restore
The lov'd companion I must still deplore?
Shall all the wisdom of the world combin'd
Erase thy image, Mary, from my mind,
Or bid me hope from others to receive
The fond affection thou alone couldst give?
Ah, no, my best belov'd, thou still shalt be
My friend, my sister, all the world to me.

" With tender woe sad memory woos back time,
And paints the scenes when youth was in its prime;
The craggy hill, where rocks, with wild flow'rs crown'd,
Burst from the hazle copse or verdant ground;
Where sportive Nature every form assumes,
And, gaily lavish, wastes a thousand blooms;
Where oft we heard the echoing hills repeat
Our untaught strains and rural ditties sweet,
Till purpling clouds proclaim'd the closing day,
While distant streams detain'd the parting ray.
Then, on some mossy stone we'd sit us down,
And watch the changing sky and shadows brown,
That swiftly glided o'er the mead below,
Or in some fancied form descended slow.
How oft, well pleas'd each other to adorn,
We stripp'd the blossoms from the fragrant thorn,
Or caught the violet where, in humble bed,
Asham'd of its own sweets it hung its head.
But, oh, what rapture Mary's eyes would speak,
Through her dark hair how rosy glow'd her cheek,
If, in her playful search, she saw appear
The first-blown cowslip of the opening year.
Thy gales, oh Spring, then whisper'd life and joy;
Now mem'ry wakes thy pleasures to destroy,
And all thy beauties serve but to renew
Regrets, too keen for reason to subdue.
Ah me! while tender recollections rise,
The ready tears obscure my sadden'd eyes,
And, while surrounding objects they conceal,
Her form belov'd the trembling drops reveal.

" Sometimes the lovely, blooming girl I view,
My youth's companion, friend for ever true,
Whose looks, the sweet expressions of a heart
So gaily innocent, so void of art,
With soft attraction whisper'd blessings drew
From all who stopp'd, her beauteous face to view.
Then in the dear domestic scene I mourn,
And weep past pleasures never to return!

There where each gentle virtue lov'd to rest,
In the pure mansion of my Mary's breast,
The days of social happiness are o'er,
The voice of harmony is heard no more;
No more her graceful tenderness shall prove
The wife's fond duty or the parent's love.
Those eyes, which bright'ned with maternal pride,
As her sweet infants wanton'd by her side,
'Twas my sad fate to see for ever close
On life, on love, the world, and all its woes;
To watch the slow disease, with hopeless care,
And veil in painful smiles my heart's despair;
To see her droop, with restless languor weak,
While fatal beauty mantled in her cheek,
Like fresh flow'rs, springing from some mouldering clay,
Cherish'd by death, and blooming from decay.
Yet, tho' oppress'd by ever-varying pain,
The gentle sufferer scarcely would complain,
Hid every sigh, each trembling doubt reprov'd,
To spare a pang to those fond hearts she lov'd.
And often, in short intervals of ease,
Her kind and cheerful spirit strove to please;
Whilst we, alas, unable to refuse
The sad delight we were so soon to lose,
Treasur'd each word, each kind expression claim'd,—
'Twas me she look'd at,'—'it was me she nam'd.'
Thus fondly soothing grief, too great to bear,
With mournful eagerness and jealous care.

"But soon, alas, from hearts with sorrow worn
Ev'n this last comfort was for ever torn:
That mind, the seat of wisdom, genius, taste,
The cruel hand of sickness now laid waste;
Subdued with pain, it shar'd the common lot,
All, all its lovely energies forgot!
The husband, parent, sister, knelt in vain,
One recollecting look alone to gain:
The shades of night her beaming eyes obscur'd,
And Nature, vanquish'd, no sharp pain endur'd;
Calm and serene—till the last trembling breath
Wafted an angel from the bed of death!

"Oh, if the soul, releas'd from mortal cares,
Views the sad scene, the voice of mourning hears,
Then, dearest saint, didst thou thy heav'n forego,
Lingering on earth in pity to our woe.
'Twas thy kind influence sooth'd our minds to peace,
And bade our vain and selfish murmurs cease;
'Twas thy soft smile, that gave the worshipp'd clay
Of thy bright essence one celestial ray,
Making e'en death so beautiful, that we,
Gazing on it, forgot our misery.
Then—pleasing thought!—ere to the realms of light
Thy franchis'd spirit took its happy flight,
With fond regard, perhaps, thou saw'st me bend
O'er the cold relics of my heart's best friend.

And heard'st me swear, while her dear hand I prest
And tears of agony bedew'd my breast,
For her lov'd sake to act the mother's part,
And take her darling infants to my heart,
With tenderest care their youthful minds improve,
And guard her treasure with protecting love.
Once more look down, blest creature, and behold
These arms the precious innocents enfold;
Assist my erring nature to fulfil
The sacred trust, and ward off every ill!
And, oh! let *her*, who is my dearest care,
Thy blest regard and heavenly influence share;
Teach me to form her pure and artless mind,
Like thine, as true, as innocent, as kind,—
That when some future day my hopes shall bless,
And every voice her virtue shall confess,
When my fond heart delighted hears her praise,
As with unconscious loveliness she strays,
'Such, let me say, with tears of joy the while,
'Such was the softness of my Mary's smile;
'Such was *her* youth, so blithe, so rosy sweet,
'And such *her* mind, unpractis'd in deceit;
'With artless elegance, unstudied grace,
'Thus did *she* gain in every heart a place!'
"Then, while the dear remembrance I behold,
Time shall steal on, nor tell me I am old,
Till, nature wearied, each fond duty o'er,
I join my Angel Friend—to part no more!"

To the conduct of Mr. Sheridan, during the last moments of his father, a further testimony has been kindly communicated to me by Mr. Jarvis, a medical gentleman of Margate, who attended Mr. Thomas Sheridan on that occasion, and whose interesting communication I shall here give in his own words :—

"On the 10th of August, 1788, I was first called on to visit Mr. Sheridan, who was then fast declining at his lodgings in this place, where he was in the care of his daughter. On the next day Mr. R. B. Sheridan arrived here from town, having brought with him Dr. Morris, of Parliament Street. I was in the bed-room with Mr. Sheridan when the son arrived, and witnessed an interview in which the father showed himself to be strongly impressed by his son's attention, saying, with considerable emotion, 'Oh Dick, I give you a great deal of trouble!' and seeming to imply by his manner, that his son had been less to blame than himself, for any previous want of cordiality between them.

"On my making my last call for the evening, Mr. R. B. Sheridan, with delicacy, but much earnestness, expressed his fear that the nurse in attendance on his father, might not be so competent as myself to the requisite attentions, and his hope that I would consent to remain in the room for a few of the first hours of the night; as he himself, having been travelling the preceding night, required some short repose. I complied with his request, and remained at the father's bedside till relieved by the son, about three o'clock in the morning;—he then insisted on

taking my place. From this time he never quitted the house till his father's death; on the day after which he wrote me a letter, now before me, of which the annexed is an exact copy :

"Sir, *Friday Morning.*

"I wished to see you this morning before I went, to thank you for your attention and trouble. You will be so good to give the account to Mr. Thompson, who will settle it; and I must further beg your acceptance of the inclosed from myself.

"I am, Sir,
"Your obedient Servant,
"R. B. Sheridan."

"I have explained to Dr. Morris (who has informed me that you will recommend a proper person), that it is my desire to have the hearse, and the manner of coming to town, as respectful as possible."

"The inclosure, referred to in this letter, was a bank-note of ten pounds,—a most liberal remuneration. Mr. R. B. Sheridan left Margate, intending that his father should be buried in London; but he there ascertained that it had been his father's expressed wish, that he should be buried in the parish next to that in which he should happen to die. He then, consequently, returned to Margate, accompanied by his brother-in-law, Mr. Tickell, with whom, and Mr. Thompson and myself, he followed his father's remains to the burial-place, which was not in Margate church-yard, but in the north aisle of the church at St. Peter's."

Mr. Jarvis, the writer of the letter from which I have given this extract, had once, as he informs me, the intention of having a cenotaph raised, to the memory of Mr. Sheridan's father, in the church of Margate[1]. With this view he applied to Dr. Parr for an Inscription, and the following is the tribute to his old friend with which that learned and kind-hearted man supplied him: —

"This monument, A. D. 1824, was, by subscription, erected to the memory of Thomas Sheridan, Esq., who died in the neighbouring parish of St. John, August 14, 1788, in the 69th year of his age, and, according to his own request, was there buried. He was grandson to Dr. Thomas Sheridan, the brother of Dr. William, a conscientious non-juror, who, in 1691, was deprived of the Bishopric of Kilmore. He was the son of Dr. Thomas Sheridan, a profound scholar and eminent schoolmaster, intimately connected with Dean Swift and other illustrious writers in the reign of Queen Anne. He was husband to the ingenious and amiable author of Sidney Biddulph, and several dramatic pieces favourably received. He was father of the celebrated orator and dramatist, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He had been the school-fellow, and, through life,

[1] Though this idea was relinquished, it appears that a friend of Mr. Jarvis, with a zeal for the memory of talent highly honourable to him, has recently caused a monument to Mr. Thomas Sheridan to be raised in the church of St. Peter.

was the companion, of the amiable Archbishop Markham. He was the friend of the learned Dr. Sumner, master of Harrow School, and the well-known Dr. Parr. He took his first academical degree in the University of Dublin, about 1736. He was honoured by the University of Oxford with the degree of A. M. in 1758, and in 1759 he obtained the same distinction at Cambridge. He, for many years, presided over the theatre of Dublin; and, at Drury-Lane, he in public estimation stood next to David Garrick. In the literary world he was distinguished by numerous and useful writings on the pronunciation of the English language. Through some of his opinions ran a vein of singularity, mingled with the rich ore of genius. In his manners there was dignified ease;—in his spirit, invincible firmness;—and in his habits and principles, unsullied integrity."

CHAPTER XIII.

Illness of the King.—Regency.—Private life of Mr. Sheridan.

Mr. SHERIDAN had assuredly no reason to complain of any deficiency of excitement in the new career to which he now devoted himself. A succession of great questions, both foreign and domestic, came, one after the other, like the waves described by the poet,—

> "And one no sooner touch'd the shore, and died,
> Than a new follower rose, and swell'd as proudly."

Scarcely had the impulse which his own genius had given to the prosecution of Hastings, begun to abate, when the indisposition of the King opened another field, not only for the display of all his various powers, but for the fondest speculations of his interest and ambition.

The robust health and temperate habits of the Monarch, while they held out the temptation of a long lease of power to those who either enjoyed or were inclined to speculate in his favour, gave proportionably the grace of disinterestedness to the followers of an Heir-Apparent, whose means of rewarding their devotion were, from the same causes, uncertain and remote. The alarming illness of the Monarch, however, gave a new turn to the prospect:—Hope was now seen, like the winged Victory of the ancients, to change sides; and both the expectations of those who looked forward to the reign of the Prince, as the great and happy millenium of Whiggism, and the apprehensions of the far greater number, to whom the morals of His Royal Highness and his friends were not less formidable than their politics, seemed now on the very eve of being realised.

On the first meeting of Parliament, after the illness of His Majesty was known, it was resolved, from considerations of delicacy,

that the House should adjourn for a fortnight; at the end of which period it was expected that another short adjournment would be proposed by the Minister. In this interval, the following judicious letter was addressed to the Prince of Wales by Mr. Sheridan :—

"Sir,

"From the intelligence of to-day we are led to think that Pitt will make something more of a speech, in moving to adjourn on Thursday, than was at first imagined. In this case we presume Your Royal Highness will be of opinion that we must not be wholly silent. I possessed Payne yesterday with my sentiments on the line of conduct which appeared to me best to be adopted on this occasion, that they might be submitted to Your Royal Highness's consideration, and I take the liberty of repeating my firm conviction, that it will greatly advance Your Royal Highness's credit, and, in case of events, lay the strongest grounds to baffle every attempt at opposition to Your Royal Highness's just claims and right, that the language of those who may be, in any sort, suspected of knowing Your Royal Highness's wishes and feelings, should be that of great moderation in disclaiming all party views, and avowing the utmost readiness to acquiesce in any reasonable delay. At the same time, I am perfectly aware of the arts which will be practised, and the advantages which some people will attempt to gain by time: but I am equally convinced that we should advance their evil views by showing the least impatience or suspicion at present; and I am also convinced that a third party will soon appear, whose efforts may, in the most decisive manner, prevent this sort of situation and proceeding from continuing long. Payne will probably have submitted to Your Royal Highness more fully my idea on this subject, towards which I have already taken some successful steps[1]. Your Royal Highness will, I am sure, have the goodness to pardon the freedom with which I give my opinion;—after which I have only to add, that whatever Your Royal Highness's judgment decides, shall be the guide of my conduct, and will undoubtedly be so to others."

Captain (afterwards Admiral) Payne, of whom mention is made in this letter, held the situation of Comptroller of the Household of the Prince of Wales, and was in attendance upon His Royal Highness during the early part of the King's illness, at Windsor. The following letters, addressed by him to Mr. Sheridan at this period, contain some curious particulars, both with respect to the Royal patient himself, and the feelings of those about him, which, however secret and confidential they were at the time, may now, without scruple, be made matters of history :—

"My Dear Sheridan, *Half-past ten at night.*

"I arrived here about three quarters of an hour after Pitt had left it. I inclose you the copy of a letter the Prince has just written to the Chancellor, and sent by express, which will give you the outline of the

[1] This must allude to the negotiation with Lord Thurlow.

conversation with the Prince, as well as the situation of the King's health. I think it an advisable measure[1], as it is a sword that cuts both ways, without being unfit to be shewn to whom he pleases,—but which he will, I think, understand best himself. Pitt desired the longest delay that could be granted with propriety, previous to the declaration of the present calamity. The Duke of York, who is looking over me, and is just come out of the King's room, bids me add, that His Majesty's situation is every moment becoming worse. His pulse is weaker and weaker; and the Doctors say it is impossible to survive it long, if his situation does not take some *extraordinary* change in a few hours.

"So far I had got when your servant came, meaning to send this by the express that carried the Chancellor's letter; in addition to which, the Prince has desired Doctor Warren to write an account to him, which he is now doing. His letter says, if an amendment does not take place in twenty-four hours, it is impossible for the King to support it:—he adds to me, he will answer for his never living to be declared a lunatic. I say all this to you in confidence, (though I will not answer for being intelligible,) as it goes by your own servant; but I need not add, your own discretion will remind you how necessary it is that neither my name nor those I use should be quoted even to many of our best friends, whose repetition, without any ill intention, might frustrate views they do not see.

"With respect to the papers, the Prince thinks you had better leave them to themselves, as we cannot authorise any report, nor can he contradict the worst;—a few hours must, every individual says, terminate our suspense, and, therefore, all precaution must be needless:—however, do what you think best. His Royal Highness would write to you himself;—the agitation he is in will not permit it. Since this letter was begun, all articulation even seems to be at an end with the poor King; but for the two hours preceding, he was in a most determined frenzy. In short, I am myself in so violent a state of agitation, from participating in the feelings of those about me, that if I am intelligible to you, 'tis more than I am to myself. Cataplasms are on His Majesty's feet, and strong fomentations have been used without effect: but let me quit so painful a subject. The Prince was much pleased with my conversation with Lord Loughborough, to whom I do not write, as I conceive 'tis the same, writing to you.

"The Archbishop has written a very handsome letter, expressive of his duty and offer of service; but he is not required to come down, it being thought too late.

"Good night.—I will write upon every occasion that information may be useful.

"Ever yours, most sincerely,
"J. W. Payne."

"I have been much pleased with the *Duke's* zeal since my return, especially in this communication to you."

"Dear Sheridan, *Twelve o'clock, noon.*

"The King last night about twelve o'clock, being then in a situation

[1] Meaning, the communication to the Chancellor.

he could not long have survived, by the effect of James's powder, had a profuse stool, after which a strong perspiration appeared, and he fell into a profound sleep. We were in hopes this was the crisis of his disorder, although the doctors were fearful it was so only with respect to one part of his disorder. However, these hopes continued not above an hour, when he awoke, with a well-conditioned skin, no extraordinary degree of fever, but with the exact state he was in before, with all the gestures and ravings of the most confirmed maniac, and a new noise, in imitation of the howling of a dog; in this situation he was this morning at one o'clock, when we came to bed. The Duke of York, who has been twice in my room in the course of the night, immediately from the King's apartment, says there has not been one moment of lucid interval during the whole night,—which, I must observe to you, is the concurring, as well as *fatal* testimony of all about him, from the first moment of His Majesty's confinement. The doctors have since had their consultation, and find His Majesty calmer, and his pulse tolerably good and much reduced, but the most decided symptoms of insanity. His theme has been all this day on the subject of religion, and of his being inspired, from which his physicians draw the worst consequences, as to any hopes of amendment. In this situation His Majesty remains at the present moment, which I give you at length, to prevent your giving credit to the thousand ridiculous reports that we hear, even upon the spot. Truth is not easily got at in palaces, and so I find here; and time only slowly brings it to one's knowledge. One hears a little bit every day from somebody, that has been reserved with great costiveness, or purposely forgotten; and by all such accounts I find that the present distemper has been very palpable for some time past, previous to any confinement from sickness; and so apprehensive have the people about him been of giving offence by interruption, that the two days (viz. yesterday se'nnight and the Monday following) that he was five hours each on horseback, he was in a confirmed frenzy. On the Monday at his return he burst out into tears to the Duke of York, and said, 'He wished to God he might die, for he was going to be mad;' and the Queen, who sent to Dr. Warren, on his arrival, privately communicated her knowledge of his situation for some time past, and the melancholy event as it stood exposed. I am prolix upon all these different reports, that you may be completely master of the subject as it stands, and which I shall continue to advertise you of in all its variations. Warren, who is the living principle in this business, (for poor Baker is half crazed himself,) and who I see every half hour, is extremely attentive to the King's disorder. The various fluctuations of his ravings, as well as general situation of his health, are accurately written down throughout the day, and this we have got signed by the Physicians every day, and all proper enquiry invited; for I think it necessary to do every thing that may prevent *their* making use hereafter of any thing like jealousy, suspicion, or mystery, to create public distrust; and, therefore, the best and most unequivocal means of satisfaction shall be always attended to.

"*Five o'clock, P. M.*

"So far I had proceeded when I was, on some business of importance, obliged to break off till now; and, on my return, found your let-

ter;—I need not, I hope, say your confidence is as safe as if it was returned to your own mind, and your advice will always be thankfully adopted. The event we looked for last night is postponed, perhaps for a short time, so that, at least, we shall have time to consider more maturely. The Doctors told Pitt they would beg not to be obliged to make their declaration for a fortnight as to the incurability of the King's mind, and not to be surprised if, at the expiration of that time, they should ask more time; but that they were perfectly ready to declare now, for the furtherance of public business, that he is now insane; that it appears to be unconnected with any other disease of his body, and that they have tried all their skill without effect, and that to the *disease they at present see no end in their contemplation* :—these are their own words, which is all that can be implied in an absolute declaration,—for infallibility cannot be ascribed to them

"Should not something be done about the public amusements? If it was represented to Pitt, it might embarrass them either way; particularly as it might call for a public account every day. I think the Chancellor might take a good opportunity to break with his colleagues, if they propose restriction: the Law authority would have great weight with us, as well as preventing even a design of moving the City;—at all events, I think Parliament would not confirm their opinion. If Pitt stirs much, I think any attempt to *grasp at power* might be fatal to his interest, at least, well turned against it.

"The Prince has sent for me directly, so I'll send this now, and write again."

In the words, "I think the Chancellor might take a good opportunity to break with his colleagues," the writer alludes to a negotiation which Sheridan had entered into with Lord Thurlow, and by which it was expected that the co-operation of that Learned Lord might be secured, in consideration of his being allowed to retain the office of Chancellor under the Regency.

Lord Thurlow was one of those persons who, being taken by the world at their own estimate of themselves, contrive to pass upon the times in which they live for much more than they are worth. His bluntness gained him credit for superior honesty, and the same peculiarity of exterior gave a weight, not their own, to his talents;—the roughness of the diamond being, by a very common mistake, made the measure of its value. The negotiation for his alliance on this occasion was managed, if not first suggested, by Sheridan; and Mr. Fox, on his arrival from the Continent, (having been sent for express upon the first announcement of the King's illness,) found considerable progress already made in the preliminaries of this heterogeneous compact.

The following letter from Admiral Payne, written immediately after the return of Mr. Fox, contains some further allusions to the negotiations with the Chancellor:—

"My Dear Sheridan,

"I am this moment returned with the Prince from riding, and heard, with great pleasure, of Charles Fox's arrival; on which account, he says, I must go to town to-morrow, when I hope to meet you at his house some time before dinner. The Prince is to see the Chancellor to-morrow, and therefore he wishes I should be able to carry to town the result of this interview, or I would set off immediately. Due deference is had to our *former opinion* upon this subject, and no courtship will be practised; for the chief object in the visit is to show him the King, who has been worse the two last days than ever: this morning he made an effort to jump out of the window, and is now very turbulent and incoherent. Sir G. Baker went yesterday to give Pitt a little specimen of his loquacity, in his discovery of some material state-secrets, at which he looked astonished. The Physicians wish him to be removed to Kew; on which we shall proceed as we settled. Have you heard any thing of the Foreign Ministers, respecting what the P. said at Bagshot? the Frenchman has been here two days running, but has not seen the prince. He sat with me half an hour this morning, and seemed much disposed to confer a little closely. He was all admiration and friendship for the Prince, and said he was sure *every body* would unite to give vigour to his government.

"To-morrow you shall hear particulars; in the mean time I can only add I have none of the apprehensions contained in Lord L.'s letter. I have had correspondence enough myself on this subject to convince me of the impossibility of the Ministry managing the present Parliament by any contrivance hostile to the Prince. Dinner is on table; so adieu; and be assured of the truth and sincerity of

"Yours affectionately,

"*Windsor, Monday, 5 o'clock, P. M.* J. W. P."

"I have just got Rodney's proxy sent."

The situation in which Mr. Fox was placed, by the treaty thus commenced, before his arrival, with the Chancellor, was not a little embarrassing. In addition to the distaste which he must have felt for such a union, he had been already, it appears, in some degree pledged to bestow the Great Seal, in the event of a change, upon Lord Loughborough. Finding, however, the Prince and his party so far committed in the negotiation with Lord Thurlow, he thought it expedient, however contrary to his own wishes, to accede to their views; and a letter, addressed by him to Mr. Sheridan on the occasion, shows the struggle with his own feelings and opinions which this concession cost him:—

"Dear Sheridan,

"I have swallowed the pill,—a most bitter one it was,—and have written to Lord Loughborough, whose answer of course must be consent. What is to be done next? Should the Prince himself, you or I, or Warren, be the person to speak to the Chancellor? The objection to the last is, that he must probably wait for an opportunity, and that no time is

to be lost. Pray tell me what is to be done: I am convinced, after all, the negotiation will not succeed, and am not sure that I am sorry for it. I do not remember ever feeling so uneasy about any political thing I ever did in my life. Call if you can.

"Yours ever,

"*Sat, past* 12. "C. J. F."

Lord Loughborough, in the mean time, with a vigilance quickened by his own personal views, kept watch on the mysterious movements of the Chancellor; and, as appears by the following letter, not only saw reason to suspect duplicity himself, but took care that Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan should share in his distrust:—

"My Dear S.

"I was afraid to pursue the conversation on the circumstance of the Inspection committed to the Chancellor, lest the reflections that arise upon it might have made too strong an impression on some of our neighbours last night. It does indeed appear to me full of mischief, and of that sort most likely to affect the apprehensions of our best friends, (of Lord John for instance,) and to increase their reluctance to take any active part.

"The Chancellor's object evidently is to make his way by himself, and he has managed hitherto as one very well practised in that game. His conversations, both with you and Mr. Fox, were encouraging, but at the same time checked all explanations on his part, under a pretence of delicacy towards his colleagues. When he let them go to Salthill, and contrived to dine at Windsor, he certainly took a step that most men would have felt not very delicate in its appearance, and unless there was some private understanding between him and them, not altogether fair; especially if you add to it the sort of conversation he held with regard to them. I cannot help thinking that the difficulties of managing the patient have been excited or improved to lead to the proposal of his inspection, (without the Prince being conscious of it,) for by that situation he gains an easy and frequent access to him, and an opportunity of possessing the confidence of the Queen. I believe this the more from the account of the tenderness he showed at his first interview, for, I am sure, it is not in his character to feel any. With a little instruction from Lord Hawksbury, the sort of management that was carried on by means of the Princess-Dowager, in the early part of the reign, may easily be practised. In short, I think he will try to find the key of the back stairs, and, with that in his pocket, take any situation that preserves his access, and enables him to hold a line between different parties. In the present moment, however, he has taken a position that puts the command of the House of Lords in his hands, for * * * * * * *[*].

"I wish Mr. Fox and you would give these considerations what weight you think they deserve, and try if any means can be taken to remedy this mischief, if it appears in the same light to you.

"Ever yours, etc."

[*] The remainder of this sentence is effaced by damp.

What were the motives that induced Lord Thurlow to break off so suddenly his negotiation with the Prince's party, and declare himself with such vehemence on the side of the King and Mr. Pitt, it does not appear very easy to ascertain. Possibly, from his opportunities of visiting the Royal Patient, he had been led to conceive sufficient hopes of recovery to incline the balance of his speculation that way; or, perhaps, in the influence of Lord Loughborough[1] over Mr. Fox, he saw a risk of being supplanted in his views on the Great Seal. Whatever may have been the motive, it is certain that his negotiation with the Whigs had been amicably carried on, till within a few hours of his delivery of that speech, from whose enthusiasm the public could little suspect how fresh from the incomplete bargain of defection was the speaker, and in the course of which he gave vent to the well-known declaration, that "his debt of gratitude to His Majesty was ample, for the many favours he had graciously conferred upon him, which when he forgot, might God forget him[2]."

As it is not my desire to imitate those biographers, who swell their pages with details that belong more properly to History, I shall forbear to enter into a minute or consecutive narrative of the proceedings of Parliament on the important subject of the Regency. A writer of political biography has a right, no doubt, like an engineer who constructs a navigable canal, to lay every brook and spring in the neighbourhood under contribution for the supply and enrichment of his work. But, to turn into it the whole contents of the Annual Register and Parliamentary Debates is a sort of literary engineering, not quite so laudable, which, after the example set by a Right Reverend biographer of Mr. Pitt, will hardly again be attempted by any one, whose ambition, at least, it is to be read as well as bought.

Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, it is well known, differed essentially, not only with respect to the form of the proceedings, which the latter recommended in that suspension of the Royal authority, but also with respect to the abstract constitutional principles upon which those proceedings of the Minister were professedly founded. As soon as the nature of the malady with which the King was afflicted, had been ascertained by a regular examination of the physicians in attendance on His Majesty, Mr. Pitt moved (on the 10th of December), that a "Committee be appointed to examine and report precedents of such proceedings as may have been had, in case of

[1] Lord Loughborough is supposed to have been the person who instilled into the mind of Mr. Fox the idea of advancing that claim of Right for the Prince, which gave Mr. Pitt, in principle as well as in fact, such an advantage over him.

[2] "Forget you!" said Wilkes; "he'll see you d—d first."

the personal exercise of the Royal authority being prevented or interrupted, by infancy, sickness, infirmity, or otherwise, with a view to provide for the same[1]."

It was immediately upon this motion that Mr. Fox advanced that inconsiderate claim of Right for the Prince of Wales, of which his rival availed himself so dexterously and triumphantly. Having asserted that there existed no precedent whatever that could bear upon the present case, Mr. Fox proceeded to say, that "the circumstance to be provided for did not depend upon their deliberations as a House of Parliament,—it rested elsewhere. There was then a person in the kingdom, different from any other person that any existing precedents could refer to,—an Heir Apparent, of full age and capacity to exercise the royal power. It behoved them, therefore, to waste not a moment unnecessarily, but to proceed with all becoming speed and diligence to restore the Sovereign power and the exercise of the Royal Authority. From what he had read of history, from the ideas he had formed of the law, and, what was still more precious, of the spirit of the Constitution, from every reasoning and analogy drawn from those sources, he declared that he had not in his mind a doubt, and he should think himself culpable if he did not take the first opportunity of declaring it, that, in the present condition of His Majesty, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had as clear, as express a Right to exercise the power of Sovereignty, during the continuance of the illness and incapacity with which it had pleased God to afflict His Majesty, as in the case of His Majesty's having undergone a natural demise."

It is said that, during the delivery of this adventurous opinion, the countenance of Mr. Pitt was seen to brighten with exultation, at the mistake into which he perceived his adversary was hurrying; and scarcely had the sentence, just quoted, been concluded, when, slapping his thigh triumphantly, he turned to the person who sat next him, and said, "I'll *un-Whig* the gentleman for the rest of his life!"

[1] Mr. Burke and Mr. Sheridan were both members of this Committee, and the following letter from the former to Sheridan refers to it:—

"My dear Sir,

"My idea was, that on Fox's declaring that the precedents, neither individually nor collectively, do at all apply, our attendance ought to have been merely formal. But as you think otherwise, I shall certainly be at the Committee soon after One. I rather think that they will not attempt to garble: because, supposing the precedents to apply, the major part are certainly in their favour. It is not likely that they mean to suppress,—but it is good to be on our guard.

"Ever most truly yours, etc.

"Edmund Burke."

"Gerard Street, Thursday Morning.

Even without this anecdote, which may be depended upon as authentic, we have sufficient evidence that such were his feelings, in the burst of animation and confidence with which he instantly replied to Mr. Fox,—taking his ground, with an almost equal temerity, upon the directly opposite doctrine, and asserting, not only that "in the case of the interruption of the personal exercise of the Royal Authority it devolved upon the other branches of the Legislature to provide a substitute for that authority," but that "the Prince of Wales had no more right to exercise the powers of government than any other person in the realm."

The truth is, the assertion of a *Right* was equally erroneous, on both sides of the question. The Constitution having provided no legal remedy for such an exigence as had now occurred, the two Houses of Parliament had as little right (in the strict sense of the word) to supply the deficiency of the Royal power, as the Prince had to be the person elected or adjudged for that purpose. Constitutional analogy and expediency were the only authorities by which the measures, necessary in such a conjuncture, could be either guided or sanctioned; and if the disputants on each side had softened down their tone to this true and practical view of the case, there would have been no material difference, in the first stage of the proceedings, between them,—Mr. Pitt being ready to allow that the Heir Apparent was the obvious person, to whom expediency pointed as the depositary of the Royal power, and Mr. Fox having granted, in a subsequent explanation of his doctrine, that, strong as was the right upon which the claim of the Prince was founded, His Royal Highness could not assume that right till it had been formally adjudicated to him by Parliament. The principle, however, having been imprudently broached, Mr. Pitt was too expert a tactician not to avail himself of the advantage it gave him. He was thus, indeed, furnished with an opportunity, not only of gaining time by an artful protraction of the discussions, but of occupying victoriously the ground of Whiggism, which Mr. Fox had, in his impatience or precipitancy, deserted, and of thus adding to the character, which he had recently acquired, of a defender of the prerogatives of the Crown, the more brilliant reputation of an assertor of the rights of the People.

In the popular view which Mr. Pitt found it convenient to take of this question, he was led, or fell voluntarily, into some glaring errors, which pervaded the whole of his reasonings on the subject. In his anxiety to prove the omnipotence of Parliament, he evidently confounded the Estates of the realm with the Legislature [1], and at-

[1] Mr. Grattan and the Irish Parliament carried this error still farther, and

tributed to two branches of the latter such powers as are only legally possessed by the whole three in Parliament assembled. For the purpose, too, of flattering the people with the notion, that to them had now reverted the right of choosing their temporary Sovereign, he applied a principle, which ought to be reserved for extreme cases, to an exigence by no means requiring this ultimate appeal,—the defect in the government being such as the still existing Estates of the realm, appointed to speak the will of the people, but superseding any direct exercise of the power, were fully competent, as in the instance of the Revolution, to remedy[1].

Indeed, the solemn use of such language as Mr. Pitt, in his over-acted Whiggism, employed upon this occasion,—namely, that the "right" of appointing a substitute for the Royal power was "to be found in the voice and the sense of the people,"—is applicable only to those conjunctures, brought on by misrule and oppression, when all forms are lost in the necessity of relief, and when the right of the people to change and choose their rulers is among the most sacred and inalienable that either nature or social polity has ordained. But, to apply the language of that last resource to the present emergency was to brandish the sword of Goliath[2] on an occasion that by no means called for it.

The question of the Prince's claim,—in spite of the efforts of the Prince himself and of his Royal relatives to avert the agitation of it,—was, for evident reasons, forced into discussion by the Minister, and decided by a majority, not only of the two Houses but of the nation, in his favour. During one of the long debates to which the question gave rise, Mr. Sheridan allowed himself to be betrayed into some expressions, which, considering the delicate predicament in which the Prince was placed by the controversy, were not marked with his usual tact and sagacity. In alluding to the claim of Right advanced for His Royal Highness, and deprecating any further agitation of it, he "reminded the Right Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Pitt) of the danger of provoking that claim to be asserted [a loud cry of hear! hear!], which, he observed, had not yet been preferred. [Another cry of hear! hear!]" This was the very language that Mr. Pitt most wished his adversaries to assume, and, accordingly, he turned it to account with all his usual mastery and haughtiness.

founded all their proceedings on the necessity of "providing for the deficiency of the Third *Estate*."

[1] The most luminous view that has been taken of this Question is to be found in an Article of the Edinburgh Review, on the Regency of 1811,—written by one of the most learned and able men of our day, Mr. John Allen.

[2] A simile applied by Lord Somers to the power of Impeachment, which, he said, "should be like Goliath's sword, kept in the temple, and not used but upon great occasions."

"He had now," he said, "an additional reason for asserting the authority of the House, and defining the boundaries of Right, when the deliberative faculties of Parliament were invaded, and an indecent menace thrown out to awe and influence their proceedings. In the discussion of the question, the House, he trusted, would do their duty, in spite of any threat that might be thrown out. Men, who felt their native freedom, would not submit to a threat, however high the authority from which it might come'."

The restrictions of the Prerogative with which Mr. Pitt thought proper to encumber the transfer of the Royal power to the Prince, formed the second great point of discussion between the parties, and brought equally adverse principles into play, Mr. Fox, still maintaining his position on the side of Royalty, defended it with much more tenable weapons than the question of Right had enabled him to wield. So founded, indeed, in the purest principles of Whiggism did he consider his opposition, on this memorable occasion, to any limitation of the Prerogative in the hands of a Regent, that he has, in his History of James II., put those principles deliberately upon record, as a fundamental article in the creed of his party. The passage to which I allude occurs in his remarks upon the Exclusion Bill; and as it contains, in a condensed form, the spirit of what he urged on the same point in 1789, I cannot do better than lay his own words before the reader. After expressing his opinion that, at the period of which he writes, the measure of exclusion from the monarchy altogether would have been preferable to any limitation of its powers, he proceeds to say:—"The Whigs, who consider the powers of the Crown as a trust for the people, a doctrine which the Tories themselves, when pushed in argument, will sometimes admit, naturally think it their duty rather to change the manager of the trust than impair the subject of it; while others, who consider them as the right or property of the King, will as naturally act as they would do in the case of any other property, and consent to the loss or annihilation of any part of it, for the purpose of preserving the remainder to him, whom they style the rightful owner." Further on he adds:—"The Royal Prerogative ought, according to the Whigs, to be reduced to such powers as are in their exercise beneficial to the people; and of the benefit of these they will not rashly suffer the people to be deprived, whether the executive power be in the hands of an hereditary or of an elective King, of a Regent, or of any other denomination of magistrate; while, on the other hand, they who consider Prerogative with reference only to Royalty will, with equal readiness, consent either to the extension or the suspen-

* *Impartial Report of all the Proceedings on the Subject of the Regency.*

sion of its exercise, as the occasional interests of the Prince may seem to require."

Taking this as a correct exposition of the doctrines of the two parties, of which Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt may be considered to have been the representatives in the Regency question of 1789, it will strike some minds that, however the Whig may flatter himself that the principle by which he is guided in such exigencies is favourable to liberty, and however the Tory may, with equal sincerity, believe his suspension of the Prerogative on these occasions to be advantageous to the Crown, yet that in both of the principles, so defined, there is an evident tendency to produce effects wholly different from those which the parties professing them contemplate.

On the one side, to sanction from authority the notion, that there are some powers of the crown which may be safely dispensed with, —to accustom the people to an abridged exercise of the Prerogative, with the risk of suggesting to their minds that its full efficacy needs not be resumed, to set an example, in short, of reducing the Kingly Power, which, by its success, may invite and authorize still further encroachments,—all these are dangers to which the alleged doctrine of Toryism, whenever brought into practice, exposes its idol: and more particularly in enlightened and speculative times, when the minds of men are in quest of the right and the useful, and when a superfluity of power is one of those abuses which they are least likely to overlook or tolerate. In such seasons, the experiment of the Tory might lead to all that he most deprecates, and the branches of the Prerogative, once cut away, might, like the lopped boughs of the fir-tree, never grow again.

On the other hand, the Whig who asserts that the Royal Prerogative ought to be reduced to such powers as are beneficial to the people, and yet stipulates, as an invariable principle, for the transfer of that Prerogative full and unimpaired whenever it passes into other hands, appears, even more perhaps than the Tory, to throw an obstacle in the way of his own object. Circumstances, it is not denied, may arise, when the increase of the powers of the Crown, in other ways, may render it advisable to controul some of its established prerogatives. But, where are we to find a fit moment for such a reform,—or what opening will be left for it by this fastidious Whig principle, which, in 1680, could see no middle step between a change of the Succession and an undiminished maintenance of the Prerogative, and which, in 1789, almost upon the heels of a Declaration that "the power of the Crown had increased and ought to be diminished," protested against even an experimental reduction of it!

According to Mr. Fox, it is a distinctive characteristic of the

Tory, to attach more importance to the person of the King than to his office. But, assuredly, the Tory is not singular in this want of political abstraction; and in England, (from a defect, Hume thinks, inherent in all limited monarchies,) the personal qualities and opinions of the Sovereign have considerable influence upon the whole course of public affairs,—being felt alike in that courtly sphere around them where their attraction acts, and in that outer circle of opposition where their repulsion comes into play. To this influence, then, upon the Government and the community, of which no abstraction can deprive the person of the monarch, the Whig principle in question (which seems to consider entireness of Prerogative as necessary to a King, as the entireness of his limbs was held to be among the Athenians,) superadds the vast power, both actual and virtual, which would flow from the inviolability of the Royal office, and forecloses, so far, the chance which the more pliant Tory doctrine would leave open, of counteracting the effects of the King's indirect personal influence, by curtailing or weakening the grasp of some of his direct regal powers. Ovid represents the Deity of Light (and on an occasion, too, which may be called a Regency question) as crowned with moveable rays, which might be put off when too strong or dazzling. But, according to this principle, the crown of Prerogative must keep its rays fixed and immoveable, and (as the poet expresses it) "*circa caput* OMNE *micantes*."

Upon the whole, however high the authorities by which this Whig doctrine was enforced in 1789, its manifest tendency, in most cases, to secure a perpetuity of superfluous powers to the Crown, appears to render it unfit, at least as an invariable principle, for any party professing to have the liberty of the people for their object. The Prince, in his admirable Letter upon the subject of the Regency to Mr. Pitt, was made to express the unwillingness which he felt, "that in his person an experiment should be made to ascertain with how small a portion of Kingly power the executive government of the country might be carried on;"—but imagination has not far to go in supposing a case, where the enormous patronage vested in the Crown, and the consequent increase of a Royal bias through the community, might give such an undue and unsafe preponderance to that branch of the Legislature, as would render any safe opportunity, however acquired, of ascertaining with *how much less* power the executive government could be carried on, most acceptable, in spite of any dogmas to the contrary, to all true lovers as well of the monarchy as of the people.

Having given thus much consideration to the opinions and principles professed on both sides of this constitutional question, it is mortifying, after all, to be obliged to acknowledge that, in the

relative situation of the two parties at the moment, may be found perhaps the real, and but too natural, source of the decidedly opposite views which they took of the subject. Mr. Pitt, about to surrender the possession of power to his rival, had a very intelligible interest in reducing the value of the transfer, and (as a retreating army spike the guns they leave behind) rendering the engines of Prerogative as useless as possible to his successor. Mr. Fox, too, had as natural a motive to oppose such a design; and, aware that the chief aim of these restrictive measures was to entail upon the Whig ministry of the Regent a weak Government and strong Opposition, would, of course, eagerly welcome the aid of any abstract principle, that might sanction him in resisting such a mutilation of the Royal power;—well knowing that (as in the case of the Peerage Bill in the reign of George I.) the proceedings altogether were actuated more by ill-will to the successor in the trust, than by any sincere zeal for the purity of its exercise.

Had the situations of the two leaders been reversed, it is more than probable that their modes of thinking and acting would have been so likewise. Mr. Pitt, with the prospect of power before his eyes, would have been still more strenuous, perhaps, for the unbroken transmission of the Prerogative—his natural leaning on the side of power being increased by his own approaching share in it. Mr. Fox too, if stopped, like his rival, in a career of successful administration, and obliged to surrender up the reins of the state to Tory guidance, might have found in his popular principles a still more plausible pretext, for the abridgment of power in such unconstitutional hands. He might even too, perhaps, (as his India Bill warrants us in supposing,) have been tempted into the same sort of alienation of the Royal patronage, as that which Mr. Pitt now practised in the establishment of the Queen, and have taken care to leave behind him a strong hold of Whiggism, to facilitate the resumption of his position, whenever an opportunity might present itself. Such is human nature, even in its noblest specimens, and so are the strongest spirits shaped by the mould in which chance and circumstances have placed them.

Mr. Sheridan spoke frequently in the Debates on this question, but his most important agency lay in the less public business connected with it. He was the confidential adviser of the Prince throughout, directed every step he took, and was the author of most of his correspondence on the subject. There is little doubt, I think, that the celebrated and masterly Letter to Mr. Pitt, which by some persons has been attributed to Burke, and by others to Sir Gilbert Elliot (afterwards Lord Minto), was principally the production of Mr. Sheridan. For the supposition that it was written by Burke

there are, beside the merits of the production, but very scanty grounds. So little was he at that period in those habits of confidence with the Prince, which would entitle him to be selected for such a task in preference to Sheridan, that but eight or ten days before the date of this letter (Jan. 2.) he had declared in the House of Commons, that "he knew as little of the inside of Carlton House as he did of Buckingham House." Indeed the violent state of this extraordinary man's temper, during the whole of the discussions and proceedings on the Regency, would have rendered him, even had his intimacy with the Prince been closer, an unfit person for the composition of a document requiring so much caution, temper, and delicacy.

The conjecture that Sir Gilbert Elliot was the author of it is somewhat more plausible,—that gentleman being at this period high in the favour of the Prince, and possessing talents sufficient to authorize the suspicion (which was in itself a reputation) that he had been the writer of a composition so admirable. But it seems hardly necessary to go farther, in quest of its author, than Mr. Sheridan, who, besides being known to have acted the part of the Prince's adviser through the whole transaction, is proved by the rough copies found among his papers, to have written several other important documents connected with the Regency.

I may also add, that an eminent statesman of the present day, who was at that period, though very young, a distinguished friend of Mr. Sheridan, and who has shown by the ability of his own state papers that he has not forgot the lessons of that school from which this able production emanated, remembers having heard some passages of the Letter discussed in Bruton Street, as if it were then in the progress of composition, and has always, I believe, been under the impression that it was principally the work of Mr. Sheridan[1].

I had written thus far on the subject of this Letter—and shall leave what I have written as a memorial of the fallacy of such conjectures—when, having still some doubts of my correctness in attributing the honour of the composition to Sheridan, I resolved to ask the opinion of my friend, Sir James Mackintosh, a person above all others qualified, by relationship of talent, to recognize and hold parley with the mighty spirit of Burke, in whatever shape the "Royal Dane" may appear. The strong impression on his mind —amounting almost to certainty—was, that no other hand but that

[1] To this authority may be added also that of the Bishop of Winchester, who says,—"Mr. Sheridan was supposed to have been materially concerned in drawing up this admirable composition."

of Burke could have written the greater part of the letter[1]: and by a more diligent enquiry, in which his kindness assisted me, it has been ascertained that his opinion was, as it could not fail to be, correct. The following extract from a letter written by Lord Minto at the time, referring obviously to the surmise that he was himself the author of the paper, confirms beyond a doubt the fact, that it was written almost solely by Burke :—

"*January* 31*st*, 1789.

"There was not a word of the Prince's Letter to Pitt mine. It was originally Burke's, altered a little, but not improved, by Sheridan and other critics. The answer made by the Prince yesterday to the Address of the two Houses was entirely mine, and done in a great hurry half an hour before it was to be delivered."

While it is with regret I give up the claim of Mr. Sheridan to this fine specimen of English composition, it but adds to my intense admiration of Burke — not on account of the beauty of the writing, for his fame required no such accession — but from that triumph of mind over temper which it exhibits—that forgetfulness of *Self*, the true, transmigrating power of genius, which enabled him thus to pass his spirit into the station of Royalty, and to assume all the calm dignity, both of style and feeling that became it.

It was to be expected that the conduct of Lord Thurlow at this period should draw down upon him all the bitterness of those who were in the secret of his ambidextrous policy, and who knew both his disposition to desert, and the nature of the motives that prevented him. To Sheridan, in particular, such a result of a negotiation, in which he had been the principal mover and mediator, could not be otherwise than deeply mortifying. Of all the various talents with which he was gifted, his dexterity in political intrigue and management was that of which he appears to have been most vain; and this vanity it was that, at a later period of his life, sometimes led him to branch off from the main body of his party, upon secret and solitary enterprises of ingenuity, which — as may be expected from all such independent movements of a partisan — generally ended in thwarting his friends and embarrassing himself.

[1] It is amusing to observe how tastes differ;—the following is the opinion entertained of this letter by a gentleman, who, I understand and can easily believe, is an old established Reviewer. After mentioning that it was attributed to the pen of Burke, he adds,—"The story, however, does not seem entitled to much credit, for the internal character of the paper is too vapid and heavy for the genius of Burke, whose ardent mind would assuredly have diffused vigour into the composition, and the correctness of whose judgment would as certainly have preserved it from the charge of inelegance and grammatical deficiency."—Dr. Watkins, *Life of Sheridan*.

Such, in nine cases out of ten, are the periodical guides of public taste.

In the debate on that clause of the Bill, which restricted the Regent from granting places or pensions in reversion, Mr. Sheridan is represented as having attacked Lord Thurlow in terms of the most unqualified severity, — speaking of "the natural ferocity and sturdiness of his temper," and of "his brutal bluffness." But to such abuse, unseasoned by wit, Mr. Sheridan was not at all likely to have condescended, being well aware that, "as in smooth oil the razor best is set," so satire is whetted to its most perfect keenness by courtesy. His clumsy reporters have, in this, as in almost all other instances, misrepresented him.

With equal personality, but more playfulness, Mr. Burke, in exposing that wretched fiction, by which the Great Seal was converted into the Third Branch of the Legislature, and the assent of the King forged to a Bill, in which his incapacity to give either assent or dissent was declared, thus expressed himself: — "But what is to be done when the Crown is in a *deliquium?* It was intended, he had heard, to set up a man with black brows and a large wig, a kind of scare-crow to the two Houses, who was to give a fictitious assent in the royal name — and this to be binding on the people at large!" The following remarkable passage, too, in a subsequent Speech, is almost too well known to be cited: — "The other House," he said, "were not yet perhaps recovered from that extraordinary burst of the pathetic which had been exhibited the other evening; they had not yet dried their eyes, or been restored to their former placidity, and were unqualified to attend to new business. The tears shed in that House on the occasion to which he alluded, were not the tears of patriots for dying laws, but of Lords for their expiring places. The iron tears, which flowed down Pluto's cheek, rather resembled the dismal bubbling of the Styx, than the gentle murmuring streams of Aganippe."

While Lord Thurlow was thus treated by the party whom he had so nearly joined, he was but coldly welcomed back by the Minister whom he had so nearly deserted. His reconciliation, too, with the latter was by no means either sincere or durable, — the renewal of friendship between politicians, on such occasions, being generally like that which the Diable Boiteux describes, as having taken place between himself and a brother sprite, — "We were reconciled, embraced, and have hated each other heartily ever since."

In the Regency, indeed, and the transactions connected with it, may be found the source of most of those misunderstandings and enmities, which broke out soon after among the eminent men of that day, and were attended with consequences so important to themselves and the country. By the difference just mentioned, between Mr. Pitt and Lord Thurlow, the ministerial arrangements of

1793 were facilitated, and the learned Lord, after all his sturdy pliancy, consigned to a life of ineffectual discontent ever after.

The disagreement between Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox, if not actually originating now—and its foundations had been, perhaps, laid from the beginning, in the total dissimilarity of their dispositions and sentiments—was, at least, considerably ripened and accelerated by the events of this period, and by the discontent that each of them, like partners in unsuccessful play, was known to feel at the mistakes which the other had committed in the game. Mr. Fox had, unquestionably, every reason to lament as well as blame the violence and virulence by which his associate has disgraced the contest. The effect, indeed, produced upon the public by the irreverent sallies of Burke, and by the too evident triumph, both of hate and hope, with which he regarded the calamitous situation of the King, contributed not a little to render still lower the already low temperature of popularity at which his party stood throughout the country. It seemed as if a long course of ineffectual struggle in politics, of frustrated ambition and unrewarded talents, had at length exasperated his mind to a degree beyond endurance; and the extravagances into which he was hurried in his speeches on this question, appear to have been but the first workings of that impatience of a losing cause—that resentment of failure, and disgust at his partners in it—which soon afterwards found such a signal opportunity of exploding.

That Mr. Burke, upon far less grounds, was equally discontented with his co-operators in this emergency, may be collected from the following passage of a letter, addressed by him in the summer of this year to Lord Charlemont, and given by Hardy in his Memoirs of that nobleman :—

"Perpetual failure, even though nothing in that failure can be fixed on the improper choice of the object or the injudicious choice of means, will detract every day more and more from a man's credit, until he ends without success and without reputation. In fact, a constant pursuit even of the best objects, without adequate instruments, detracts something from the opinion of a man's judgment. This, I think, may be in part the cause of the inactivity of others of our friends who are in the vigour of life and in possession of a great degree of lead and authority. I do not blame them, though I lament that state of the public mind, in which the people can consider the exclusion of such talents and such virtues from their service, as a point gained to them. The only point in which I can find any thing to blame in these friends, is their not taking the effectual means, which they certainly had in their power, of making an honourable retreat from their prospect of power into the possession of reputation, by an effectual defence of themselves. There was an opportunity which was not made use of for that purpose, and which could scarcely have failed of turning the tables on their adversaries."

Another instance of the embittering influence of these transactions may be traced in their effects upon Mr. Burke and Mr. Sheridan—between whom there had arisen a degree of emulation, amounting to jealousy, which, though hitherto chiefly confined to one of the parties, received on this occasion such an addition of fuel, as spread it equally through the minds of both, and conduced, in no small degree, to the explosion that followed. Both Irishmen, and both adventurers in a region so much elevated above their original station, it was but natural that some such feeling should kindle between them; and that, as Burke was already mid-way in his career, when Sheridan was but entering the field, the stirrings, whether of emulation or envy, should first be felt by the latter. It is, indeed, said that in the ceremonial of Hastings's Trial, the privileges enjoyed by Burke, as a Privy-counsellor, were regarded with evident uneasiness by his brother Manager, who could not as yet boast the distinction of Right Honourable before his name. As soon, however, as the rapid run of Sheridan's success had enabled him to overtake his veteran rival, this feeling of jealousy took possession in full force of the latter,—and the close relations of intimacy and confidence, to which Sheridan was now admitted both by Mr. Fox and the Prince, are supposed to have been not the least of those causes of irritation and disgust, by which Burke was at length driven to break with the party altogether, and to show his gigantic strength at parting, by carrying away some of the strongest pillars of Whiggism in his grasp.

Lastly, to this painful list of the feuds, whose origin is to be found in the times and transactions of which we are speaking, may be added that slight, but too visible cloud of misunderstanding, which arose between Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, and which, though it never darkened into any thing serious, continued to pervade their intercourse with each other to the last—exhibiting itself, on the part of Mr. Fox, in a degree of distrustful reserve not natural to him, and, on the side of Sheridan, in some of those counter-workings of influence, which, as I have already said, he was sometimes induced by his love of the diplomacy of politics to practise.

Among the appointments named in contemplation of a Regency, the place of Treasurer of the Navy was allotted to Mr. Sheridan. He would never, however, admit the idea of certainty in any of the arrangements so sanguinely calculated upon, but continually impressed upon his impatient friends the possibility, if not probability, of the King's recovery. He had even refused to look at the plan of the apartments, which he himself was to occupy in Somerset House; and had but just agreed that it should be sent to him for examination, on the very day when the King was declared convalescent by

Dr. Warren. "He entered his own house (to use the words of the relater of the anecdote) at dinner-time with the news. There were present,—besides Mrs. Sheridan and his sister,—Tickell, who, on the change of administration, was to have been immediately brought into Parliament,—Joseph Richardson, who was to have had Tickell's place of Commissioner of the Stamp-office,—Mr. Reid, and some others. Not one of the company but had cherished expectations from the approaching change—not one of them, however, had lost so much as Mr. Sheridan. With his wonted equanimity he announced the sudden turn affairs had taken, and looking round him cheerfully, as he filled a large glass, said,—'Let us all join in drinking His Majesty's speedy recovery.'

The measures which the Irish Parliament adopted on this occasion, would have been productive of anomalies, both theoretic and practical, had the continued illness of the King allowed the projected Regency to take place. As it was, the most material consequence that ensued was the dismissal from their official situations of Mr. Ponsonby and other powerful individuals, by which the Whig party received such an accession of strength, as enabled them to work out for their country the few blessings of liberty that still remain to her. Among the victims to their votes on this question was Mr. Charles Sheridan, who, on the recovery of the King, was dismissed from his office of Secretary of War, but received compensation by a pension of 1200*l.* a-year, with the reversion of 300*l.* a-year to his wife.

The ready and ardent burst of devotion with which Ireland, at this moment, like the Pythagoreans at their morning worship, turned to welcome with her Harp the Rising Sun, was long remembered by the object of her homage with pride and gratitude, —and, let us trust, is not even yet entirely forgotten [1].

It has already been mentioned that to Mr. Sheridan, at this period, was entrusted the task of drawing up several of the State Papers of the Heir Apparent. From the rough copies of these papers that have fallen into my hands, I shall content myself with selecting two Letters—the first of which was addressed by the Prince to the Queen, immediately after the communication to Her Majesty of the Resolution of the two Houses placing the Royal Household under her control.

Before Your Majesty gives an answer to the application for your Royal permission to place under Your Majesty's separate authority the direction

[1] This vain hope was expressed before the late decision on the Catholic question had proved to the Irish that, where *their* rights are concerned, neither public nor private pledges are regarded.

and appointment of the King's household, and thereby to separate from the difficult and arduous situation which I am unfortunately called upon to fill, the accustomed and necessary support which has ever belonged to it, permit me, with every sentiment of duty and affection towards Your Majesty, to entreat your attentive perusal of the papers which I have the honour to enclose. They contain a sketch of the plan now proposed to be carried into execution as communicated to me by Mr. Pitt, and the sentiments which I found myself bound in duty to declare in reply to that communication. I take the liberty of lodging these papers in Your Majesty's hands, confiding that, whenever it shall please Providence to remove the malady with which the King my father is now unhappily afflicted, Your Majesty will, in justice to me and to those of the Royal family whose affectionate concurrence and support I have received, take the earliest opportunity of submitting them to his Royal perusal, in order that no interval of time may elapse before he is in possession of the true motives and principles upon which I have acted. I here solemnly repeat to Your Majesty, that among those principles there is not one which influences my mind so much as the firm persuasion I have, that my conduct in endeavouring to maintain unimpaired and undivided the just rights, prerogatives, and dignity of the Crown, in the person of the King's representative, is the only line of conduct which would entitle me to His Majesty's approbation, or enable me to stand with confidence in his Royal presence on the happy day of his recovery; — and on the contrary, that those who, under colour of respect and attachment to his Royal person, have contrived this project for enfeebling and degrading the executive authority of the realm, will be considered by him as having risked the happiness of his people and the security of the throne itself, by establishing a fatal precedent which may hereafter be urged against his own authority, on as plausible pretences, or revived against the just rights of his family. In speaking my opinions of the motive of the projectors of this scheme, I trust I need not assure Your Majesty that the respect, duty, and affection I owe to Your Majesty have never suffered me for a single moment to consider you countenancing, in the slightest degree, their plan or their purposes. I have the firmest reliance on Your Majesty's early declaration to me, on the subject of public affairs, at the commencement of our common calamity; and, whatever may be the efforts of evil or interested advisers, I have the same confidence that you will never permit or endure that the influence of your respected name shall be profaned to the purpose of distressing the government, and insulting the person of your son. How far those, who are evidently pursuing both these objects, may be encouraged by Your Majesty's acceptance of one part of the powers purposed to be lodged in your hands, I will not presume to say [1]. The proposition has

[1] In speaking of the extraordinary *imperium in imperio*, with which the command of so much power and patronage would have invested the Queen, the Annual Register (Robinson's) remarks justly, "It was not the least extraordinary circumstance in these transactions, that the Queen could be prevailed upon to lend her name to a project which would eventually have placed her in avowed rivalship with her son, and, at a moment when her attention might seem to be absorbed by domestic calamity, have established her at the head of a political party."

assumed the shape of a Resolution of Parliament, and therefore I am silent.

"Your Majesty will do me the honour to weigh the opinions I formed and declared before Parliament had entertained the plan, and, with those before you, your own good judgment will decide I have only to add, that whatever that decision may be, nothing will ever alter the interest of true affection and inviolable duty," etc. etc.

The second Letter that I shall give, from the rough copy of Mr. Sheridan, was addressed by the Prince to the King after his recovery, announcing the intention of His Royal Highness to submit to His Majesty a Memorial, in vindication of his own conduct and that of his Royal brother the Duke of York, throughout the whole of the proceeding consequent upon His Majesty's indisposition.

"Sir,

"Thinking it probable that I should have been honoured with your commands to attend Your Majesty on Wednesday last, I have unfortunately lost the opportunity of paying my duty to Your Majesty before your departure from Weymouth. The accounts I have received of Your Majesty's health have given me the greatest satisfaction; and should it be Your Majesty's intention to return to Weymouth, I trust, Sir, there will be no impropriety in my *then* intreating Your Majesty's gracious attention to a point of the greatest moment to the peace of my own mind, and one in which I am convinced Your Majesty's feelings are equally interested. Your Majesty's letter to my brother the Duke of Clarence, in May last, was the first direct intimation I had ever received that my conduct and that of my brother the Duke of York, during Your Majesty's late lamented illness, had brought on us the heavy misfortune of Your Majesty's displeasure. I should be wholly unworthy the return of Your Majesty's confidence and good opinion, which will ever be the first objects of my life, if I could have read the passage I refer to in that letter without the deepest sorrow and regret for the effect produced on Your Majesty's mind; though at the same time I felt the firmest persuasion that Your Majesty's generosity and goodness would never permit that effect to *remain*, without affording us an opportunity of knowing what had been urged against us, of replying to our accusers, and of justifying ourselves, if the means of justification were in our power.

"Great however as my impatience and anxiety were on this subject, I felt it a superior consideration not to intrude any unpleasing or agitating discussion upon Your Majesty's attention, during an excursion devoted to the ease and amusement necessary for the re-establishment of Your Majesty's health. I determined to sacrifice my own feelings, and to wait with resignation till the fortunate opportunity should arrive, when Your Majesty's own paternal goodness would, I was convinced, lead you even to *invite* your sons to that fair hearing, which your justice would not deny to the meanest individual of your subjects. In this painful interval I have employed myself in drawing up a full statement and account of my conduct during the period alluded to, and of the motives and circumstances which influenced me. When these shall be

humbly submitted to Your Majesty's consideration, I may be possibly found to have erred in judgment, and to have acted on mistaken principles, but I have the most assured conviction that I shall not be found to have been deficient in that duteous affection to Your Majesty which nothing shall ever diminish. Anxious for every thing that may contribute to the comfort and satisfaction of Your Majesty's mind, I cannot omit this opportunity of lamenting those appearances of a less gracious disposition in the Queen, towards my brothers and myself, than we were accustomed to experience; and to assure Your Majesty, that if by your affectionate interposition these most unpleasant sensations should be happily removed, it would be an event not less grateful to our minds than satisfactory to Your Majesty's own benign disposition. I will not longer," etc. etc.

"G. P."

The Statement here announced by His Royal Highness (a copy of which I have seen, occupying, with its Appendix, near a hundred folio pages,) is supposed to have been drawn up by Lord Minto.

To descend from documents of such high import to one of a much humbler nature, the following curious memorial was presented this year to Mr. Sheridan, by a literary gentleman whom the Whig party thought it worth while to employ in their service, and who, as far as industry went, appears to have been not unworthy of his hire. Simonides is said to be the first author that ever wrote for pay, but Simonides little dreamt of the perfection to which his craft would one day be brought.

Memorial for Dr. W. T.[1], *Fitzroy-Street, Fitzroy-Chapel.*

"In May, 1787, Dr. Parr, in the name of his political friends, engaged Dr. T. to embrace those opportunities, which his connections with booksellers and periodical publications might afford him, of supporting the principles of their party. Mr. Sheridan in August, 1787, gave two notes, 50*l.* each, to Dr. T. for the first year's service, which notes were paid at different periods—the first by Mr. Sheridan at Brookes's, in January, 1788, the second by Mr. Windham in May, 1788. Mr. Sheridan, in different conversations, encouraged Dr. T. to go on with the expectation of a like sum yearly, or 50*l.* half yearly. Dr. T. with this encouragement engaged in different publications for the purpose of this agreement. He is charged for the most part with the political and historical articles in the Analytical Review, and he also occasionally writes the Political Appendix to the English Review, of which particularly he wrote that for April last, and that for June last. He also every week writes an abridgment of Politics for the Whitehall Evening Post,

[1] This industrious Scotchman (of whose name I have only given the initials) was not without some share of humour. On hearing that a certain modern philosopher had carried his belief in the perfectibility of all living things so far, as to say that he did not despair of seeing the day when tigers themselves might be educated, Dr. T. exclaimed, "I should like dearly to see him in a cage with *two* of his pupils!"

and a Political Review every month for a Sunday paper entitled The Review and Sunday Advertiser. In a Romance, entitled 'Mammoth, or Human Nature displayed, etc.,' Dr. T. has shown how mindful he is on all occasions of his engagements to those who confide in him. He has also occasionally moved other engines, which it would be tedious and might appear too trifling to mention. Dr. T. is not ignorant that uncommon changes have happened in the course of this last year, that is, the year preceding May, 1789. Instead of 100*l.*, therefore, he will be satisfied with 50*l.* for that year, provided that this abatement shall not form a precedent against his claim of 100*l.* annually, if his further services shall be deemed acceptable. There is one point on which Dr. T. particularly reserved himself, namely, to make no attack on Mr. Hastings, and this will be attested by Dr. Parr, Mr. Sheridan, and, if the Doctor rightly recollects, by Mr. Windham.

"*Fitzroy-Street, 21st July*, 1789."

Taking into account all the various circumstances that concurred to glorify this period of Sheridan's life, we may allow ourselves, I think, to pause upon it as the apex of the pyramid, and, whether we consider his fame, his talents, or his happiness, may safely say, "Here is their highest point."

The new splendour which his recent triumphs in eloquence had added to a reputation already so illustrious,—the power which he seemed to have acquired over the future destinies of the country, by his acknowledged influence in the councils of the Heir Apparent, and the tribute paid to him, by the avowal both of friends and foes, that he had used this influence, in the late trying crisis of the Regency with a judgment and delicacy that proved him worthy of it,—all these advantages, both brilliant and solid, which subsequent circumstances but too much tended to weaken, at this moment surrounded him in their newest lustre and promise.

He was just now, too, in the first enjoyment of a feeling, of which habit must have afterwards dulled the zest, namely, the proud consciousness of having surmounted the disadvantages of birth and station, and placed himself on a level with the highest and noblest of the land. This footing in the society of the great he could only have attained by parliamentary eminence;—as a mere writer, with all his genius, he never would have been thus admitted *ad eundem* among them. Talents, in literature or science, unassisted by the advantages of birth, may lead to association with the great, but rarely to equality;—it is a passport through the well-guarded frontier, but no title to naturalisation within. By him, who has not been born among them, this can only be achieved by politics. In that arena, which they look upon as their own, the Legislature of the land, let a man of genius, like Sheridan, but assert his supremacy—at once all these barriers of reserve and pride give way, and he takes, by

storm, a station at their side, which a Shakspeare or a Newton would but have enjoyed by courtesy.

In fixing upon this period of Sheridan's life, as the most shining æra of his talents as well as his fame, it is not meant to be denied that in his subsequent warfare with the Minister, during the stormy time of the French Revolution, he exhibited a prowess of oratory no less suited to that actual service, than his eloquence on the trial of Hastings had been to such lighter tilts and tournaments of peace. But the effect of his talents was far less striking;—the current of feeling through England was against him;—and, however greatly this added to the merit of his efforts, it deprived him of that echo from the public heart, by which the voice of the orator is endued with a sort of multiplied life, and, as it were, survives itself. In the panic, too, that followed the French Revolution, all eloquence, but that from the lips of Power, was disregarded, and the voice of him at the helm was the only one listened to in the storm.

Of his happiness, at the period of which we are speaking, in the midst of so much success and hope, there can be but little doubt. Though pecuniary embarrassment, as appears from his papers, had already begun to weave its fatal net around him, there was as yet little more than sufficed to give exercise to his ingenuity, and the resources of the Drury-Lane treasury were still in full nightly flow. The charms by which his home was embellished were such as few other homes could boast; and, if any thing made it less happy than it ought to be, the cause was to be found in the very brilliancy of his life and attractions, and in those triumphs out of the sphere of domestic love, to which his vanity, perhaps, oftener than his feelings, impelled him.

Among his own immediate associates, the gaiety of his spirits amounted almost to boyishness. He delighted in all sorts of dramatic tricks and disguises; and the lively parties, with which his country-house was always filled, were kept in momentary expectation of some new device for their mystification or amusement[1]. It was not unusual to despatch a man and horse seven or eight miles for a piece of crape or a mask, or some other such trifle for these frolics. His friends Tickell and Richardson, both men of wit and

[1] To give some idea of the youthful tone of this society, I shall mention one out of many anecdotes related to me by persons who had themselves been ornaments of it. The ladies having one evening received the gentlemen in masquerade dresses, which, with their obstinate silence, made it impossible to distinguish one from the other, the gentlemen, in their turn, invited the ladies, next evening, to a similar trial of conjecture on themselves; and notice being given that they were ready dressed, Mrs. Sheridan and her companions were admitted into the dining-room, where they found a party of Turks, sitting silent and masked round the table. After a long course of the usual guesses, exclamations, etc. etc., and each

humour, and the former possessing the same degree of light animal spirits as himself, were the constant companions of all his social hours, and kept up with him that ready rebound of pleasantry, without which the play of wit languishes.

There is a letter, written one night by Richardson at Tunbridge [1], (after waiting five long hours for Sheridan,) so full of that mixture of melancholy and humour, which chequered the mind of this interesting man, that, as illustrative of the character of one of Sheridan's most intimate friends, it may be inserted here :—

"Dear Sheridan, *Half-past nine, Mount Ephraim.*

"After you had been gone an hour or two I got moped damnably Perhaps there is a sympathy between the corporeal and the mind's eye. In the Temple I can't see far before me, and seldom extend my speculations on things to come into any fatiguing sketch of reflection.—From your window, however, there was a tedious scope of black atmosphere, that I think won my mind into a short of fellow-travellership, pacing me again through the cheerless waste of the past, and presenting hardly one little rarified cloud to give a dim ornament to the future; —not a star to be seen;—no permanent light to gild my horizon;—only the fading helps to transient gaiety in the lamps of Tunbridge;—no Law coffee-house at hand, or any other house of relief;—no antagonist to bicker one into a control of one's cares by a successful opposition [2], nor a softer enemy to soothe one into an oblivion of them.

lady having taken the arm of the person she was most sure of, they heard a burst of laughter through the half-open door, and looking there, saw the gentlemen themselves in their proper persons,—the masks, upon whom they had been lavishing their sagacity, being no other than the maid-servants of the house, who had been thus dressed up to deceive them.

[1] In the year 1790, when Mrs. Sheridan was trying the waters of Tunbridge for her health. In a letter to Sheridan's sister from this place, dated September, 1790, she says, "I drink the waters once-a-day, and ride and drive all the forenoon, which makes me ravenous when I return. I feel I am in very good health, and I am told that I am in high beauty, two circumstances which ought and do put me in high good humour."

[2] Richardson was remarkable for his love of disputation; and Tickell, when hard pressed by him in argument, used often, as a last resource, to assume the voice and manner of Mr. Fox, which he had the power of mimicking so exactly, that Richardson confessed he sometimes stood awed and silenced by the resemblance.

This disputatious humour of Richardson was once turned to account by Sheridan in a very characteristic manner. Having had a hackney-coach in employ for five or six hours, and not being provided with the means of paying it, he happened to espy Richardson in the street, and proposed to take him in the coach some part of his way. The offer being accepted, Sheridan lost no time in starting a subject of conversation, on which he knew his companion was sure to become argumentative and animated Having, by well-managed contradiction, brought him to the proper pitch of excitement, he affected to grow impatient and angry, himself, and saying that "he could not think of staying in the same coach with a person that would use such language," pulled the check-string, and desired the

"It is damned foolish for ladies to leave their scissors about;—the frail thread of a worthless life is soon snipped. I wish to God my fate had been true to its first destination, and made a parson of me;—I should have made an excellent country Joll. I think I can, with confidence, pronounce the character that would have been given of me:—He was an indolent good-humoured man, civil at all times, and hospitable at others, namely, when he was able to be so, which, truth to say, happened but seldom. His sermons were better than his preaching, and his doctrine better than his life; though often grave, and sometimes melancholy, he nevertheless loved a joke,—the more so when overtaken in his cups, which, a regard to the faith of history compels us to subjoin, fell out not unfrequently. He had more thought than was generally imputed to him, though it must be owned no man alive ever exercised thought to so little purpose. Rebecca, his wife, the daughter of an opulent farmer in the neighbourhood of his small living, brought him eighteen children; and he now rests with those who, being rather *not* absolutely vicious than actively good, confide in the bounty of Providence to strike a mild average between the contending negations of their life, and to allow them in their future state, what he ordained them in this earthly pilgrimage, a snug neutrality and a useless repose.—I had witten thus far, absolutely determined, under an irresistible influence of the megrims, to set off for London on foot, when, accidentally searching for a cardialgic, to my great delight, I discovered three fugitive sixpences, headed by a vagrant shilling, immerged in the heap in my waistcoat pocket. This discovery gave an immediate elasticity to my mind; and I have therefore devised a scheme, worthier the improved state of my spirits, namely, to swindle your servants out of a horse, under the pretence of a ride upon the heath, and to jog on contentedly homewards. So, under the protection of Providence, and the mercy of footpads, I trust we shall meet again, to-morrow; at all events, there is nothing huffish in this; for, whether sad or merry, I am always,

"Most affectionately yours,

"J. Richardson."

"P. S. Your return only confirmed me in my resolution of going; for I had worked myself, in five hours' solitude, into such a state of nervous melancholy, that I found I could not help the meanness of crying, even if any one looked me in the face. I am anxious to avoid a regular conviction of so disreputable an infirmity;—besides, the night has become quite pleasant."

Between Tickell and Sheridan there was a never-ending "skirmish of wit," both verbal and practical; and the latter kind, in particular, was carried on between them with all the waggery, and, not unfrequently, the malice of School-boys [1]. Tickell, much less

coachman to let him out. Richardson, wholly occupied with the argument, and regarding the retreat of his opponent as an acknowledgment of defeat, still pressed his point, and even hollowed "more last words" through the coach-window after Sheridan, who, walking quietly home, left the poor disputant responsible for the heavy fare of the coach.

[1] On one occasion, Sheridan having covered the floor of a dark passage, lead-

occupied by business than his friend, had always some political *jeux d'esprit* on the anvil; and sometimes these trifles were produced by them jointly. The following string of pasquinades, so well known in political circles, and written, as the reader will perceive, at different dates, though principally by Sheridan, owes some of its stanzas to Tickell, and a few others, I believe, to Lord John Townshend. I have strung together, without regard to chronology, the best of these detached lampoons. Time having removed their venom, and with it, in a great degree, their wit, they are now, like dried snakes, mere harmless objects of curiosity.

"Johnny W—lks, Johnny W—lks',
Thou greatest of bilks,
How chang'd are the notes you now sing!
Your fam'd Forty-five
Is Prerogative,
And your blasphemy, 'God save the King,'
Johnny W—lks,
And your blasphemy, 'God save the King.'"

"Jack Ch—ch—ll, Jack Ch—ch—ll,
The town sure you search ill,
Your mob has disgraced all your brags;
When next you draw out
Your hospital rout,
Do, prithee, afford them clean rags,
Jack Ch—ch—ll,
Do, prithee, afford them clean rags."

"Captain K—th, Captain K—th,
Keep your tongue 'twixt your teeth,
Lest bed-chamber tricks you betray:
And, if teeth you want more,
Why, my bold Commodore,
You may borrow of Lord G—ll—y,
Captain K—th,
You may borrow of Lord G—ll—y."

ing from the drawing-room, with all the plates and dishes of the house, ranged closely together, provoked his unconscious play-fellow to pursue him into the midst of them. Having left a path for his own escape, he passed through easily, but Tickell, falling at full length into the ambuscade, was very much cut in several places. The next day, Lord John Townshend, on paying a visit to the bed-side of Tickell, found him covered over with patches, and indignantly vowing vengeance against Sheridan for this unjustifiable trick. In the midst of his anger, however, he could not help exclaiming, with the true feeling of an amateur of this sort of mischief, "but how amazingly well done it was!"

[1] In Sheridan's copy of the stanzas written by him in this metre at the time of the Union, (beginning "Zooks, Harry! zooks, Harry!") he entitled them, "An admirable new Ballad, which goes excellently well to the tune of

"Mrs Arne, Mrs. Arne,
It gives me consarn," etc.

" [1] Joe M—wb—y, Joe M—wb—y,
Your throat sure must raw be,
In striving to make yourself heard;
But it pleased not the pigs,
Nor the Westminster Whigs,
That your Knighthood should utter one word,
Joe M—wb—y,
That your Knighthood should utter one word."

" M—ntm—res, M—ntm—res,
Whom nobody for is,
And *for* whom we none of us care;
From Dublin you came—
It had been much the same
If Your Lordship had staid where you were,
M—ntm—res,
If Your Lordship had staid where you were."

" Lord O—gl—y, Lord O—gl—y,
You spoke mighty strongly—
Who you *are*, tho', all people admire!
But I'll let you depart,
For I believe in my heart,
You had rather they did not enquire,
Lord O—gl—y,
You had rather they did not enquire."

" Gl—nb—e, Gl—nb—e,
What's good for the scurvy?
For ne'er be your old trade forgot—
In your arms rather quarter
A pestle and mortar,
And your crest be a spruce gallipot,
Gl—nb—e,
Your crest be a spruce gallipot."

" Gl—nb—e, Gl—nb—e,
The world's topsy-turvy,
Of this truth you're the fittest attester;
For, who can deny
That the Low become High,
When the King makes a Lord of Silvester,
Gl—nb—e,
When the King makes a Lord of Silvester."

" Mr. P—l, Mr. P—l,
In return for your zeal,
I am told they have dubb'd you Sir Bob;
Having got wealth enough
By coarse Manchester stuff,
For honours you'll now drive a job,
Mr. P—l,
For honours you'll now drive a job."

[1] This stanza and, I rather think, the next, were by Lord John Townshend.

"Oh poor B—ks, oh poor B—ks,
Still condemn'd to the ranks,
Nor e'en yet from a private promoted;
Pitt ne'er will relent,
Though he knows you repent
Having once or twicé honestly voted,
Poor B—ks,
Having once or twice honestly voted."

"Dull H—l—y, dull H—l—y,
Your auditors feel ye
A speaker of very great weight,
And they wish you were dumb,
When, with ponderous hum,
You lengthen the drowsy debate,
Dull H—l—y,
You lengthen the drowsy debate."

There are about as many more of these stanzas, written at different intervals, according as new victims, with good names for rhyming, presented themselves,—the metre being a most tempting medium for such lampoons. There is, indeed, appended to one of Sheridan's copies of them, a long list (like a Tablet of Proscription), containing about fifteen other names marked out for the same fate; and it will be seen by the following specimen that some of them had a very narrow escape:

"Will C—rt—s . . . . . ."
"V—ns—t—t, V—ns—t—t,—for little thou fit art."
"Will D—nd—s, Will D—nd—s,—were you only an ass."
"L—ghb—h,—thorough."
"Sam H—rsl—y, Sam H—rsl—y, . . . coarsely."
"P—ttym—n, P—ttym,—n,—speak truth, if you can."

But it was not alone for such lively purposes [1] that Sheridan and his two friends drew upon their joint wits; they had also but too

[1] As I have been mentioning some instances of Sheridan's love of practical jests, I shall take this opportunity of adding one more anecdote, which I believe is pretty well known, but which I have had the advantage of hearing from the person on whom the joke was inflicted.

The Rev. Mr. O'B——(afterwards Bishop of——) having arrived to dinner at Sheridan's country-house near Osterley, where, as usual, a gay party was collected, (consisting of General Burgoyne, Mrs. Crewe, Tickell, etc.) it was proposed that on the next day (Sunday) the Rev. Gentleman should, on gaining the consent of the resident clergyman, give a specimen of his talents as a preacher in the village-church. On his objecting that he was not provided with a sermon, his host offered to write one for him, if he would consent to preach it; and, the offer being accepted, Sheridan left the company early, and did not return for the remainder of the evening. The following morning Mr. O'B——found the manuscript by his bed-side, tied together neatly (as he described it) with riband;—the subject of the discourse being the "Abuse of Riches." Having read it over and corrected some theological errors, (such as "it is easier for a camel, *as Moses says*," etc.)

much to do with subjects of a far different nature—with debts, bonds, judgments, writs, and all those other humiliating matters of fact, that bring Law and Wit so often and so unnaturally in contact. That they were serviceable to each other, in their defensive alliance against duns, is fully proved by various documents; and I have now before me articles of agreement, dated in 1787, by which Tickell, to avert an execution from the Theatre, bound himself as security for Sheridan in the sum of 250*l.*,—the arrears of an annuity charged upon Sheridan's moiety of the property. So soon did those pecuniary difficulties, by which his peace and character were afterwards undermined, begin their operations.

Yet even into transactions of this nature, little as they are akin to mirth, the following letter of Richardson will show that these brother wits contrived to infuse a portion of gaiety:—

"Dear Sheridan, *Essex-Street, Saturday evening.*

"I had a terrible long batch with Bobby this morning, after I wrote to you by François. I have so far succeeded that he has agreed to continue the day of trial as *we* call it (that is, in vulgar, unlearned language, to put it off), from Tuesday till Saturday. He demands, as preliminaries, that Wright's bill of 500*l.* should be given up to him, as a prosecution had been commenced against him, which, however, he has stopped by an injunction from the Court of Chancery. This, if the transaction be as he states it, appears reasonable enough. He insists, besides, that the bill should undergo the most rigid examination; that you should transmit your objections, to which he will send answers (for the point of a personal interview has not been yet carried), and that the whole amount at last, whatever it may be, should have your clear and satisfied approbation:—nothing to be done without this—almighty honour!

"All these things being done, I desired to know what was to be the result at last:—'Surely, after having carried so many points, you will think it only common decency to relax a little as to the time of payment? You will not cut your pound of flesh the nearest from the merchant's heart?' To this Bobides, "I must have 2000*l.* put in a shape of practicable use, and payment immediately;—for the rest I will accept security,'

he delivered the sermon in his most impressive style; much to the delight of his own party, and to the satisfaction, as he unsuspectingly flattered himself, of all the rest of the congregation, among whom was Mr. Sheridan's wealthy neighbour, Mr. C——.

Some months afterwards, however, Mr. O'B——perceived that the family of Mr. C——, with whom he had previously been intimate, treated him with marked coldness; and, on his expressing some innocent wonder at the circumstance, was at length informed, to his dismay, by General Burgoyne, that the sermon which Sheridan had written for him was, throughout, a personal attack upon Mr. C——, who had at that time rendered himself very unpopular in the neighbourhood by some harsh conduct to the poor, and to whom every one in the church, except the unconscious preacher, applied almost every sentence of the sermon.

This was strongly objected to by me, as Jewish in the extreme; but, however, so we parted. You will think with me, I hope, that something has been done, however, by this meeting. It has opened an access to a favourable adjustment, and time and trist may do much. I am to see him again on Monday morning at two, so pray don't go out of town to-morrow without my seeing you. The matter is of immense consequence. I never knew till to-day that the process had been going on so long. I am convinced he could force you to trial next Tuesday—with all your infirmities green upon your head; so pray attend to it.

"*R. B. Sheridan, Esq.* "Yours ever,

"*Lower Grosvenor-Street.* "J. Richardson."

This letter was written in the year 1792, when Sheridan's involvements had begun to thicken around him more rapidly. There is another letter, about the same date, still more characteristic,—where, after beginning in evident anger and distress of mind, the writer breaks off, as if irresistibly, into the old strain of playfulness and good humour.

"Dear Sheridan, *Wednesday, Essex-Street, July* 30.

"I write to you with more unpleasant feelings than I ever did in my life. Westly, after having told me for the last three weeks that nothing was wanting for my accommodation but your consent, having told me so, so late as Friday, sends me word on Monday that he would not do it at all. In four days I have a *cognovit* expires for 200*l.* I can't suffer my family to be turned into the streets if I can help it. I have no resource but my abilities, such as they are. I certainly mean to write something in the course of the summer. As a matter of business and bargain I *can* have no higher hope about it than that you won't suffer by it. However, if you won't take it somebody else *must*, for no human consideration will induce me to leave any means untried, that may rescue my family from this impending misfortune.

"For the sake of convenience you will probably give me the importance of construing this into an incendiary letter. I wish to God you may, and order your treasurer to deposit the acceptance accordingly; for nothing can be so irksome to me as that the nations of the earth should think there had been any interruption of friendship between you and me; and though that would not be the case in fact, both being influenced, I must believe, by a necessity which we could not control, yet the said nations would so interpret it. If I don't hear from you before Friday, I shall conclude that you leave me in this dire scrape to shift for myself.

"*R. B. Sheridan, Esq.*, "Yours ever,

"*Isleworth, Middlesex.* "J. Richardson."

CHAPTER XIV.

French Revolution.—Mr. Burke.—His Breach with Mr. Sheridan.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox.—Russian armament.—Royal Scotch boroughs.

We have now to consider the conduct and opinions of Mr. Sheridan, during the measures and discussions consequent upon the French Revolution,—an event by which the minds of men throughout all Europe were thrown into a state of such feverish excitement, that a more than usual degree of tolerance should be exercised towards the errors and extremes into which all parties were hurried during the paroxysm. There was, indeed, no rank or class of society, whose interests and passions were not deeply involved in the question. The powerful and the rich, both of State and Church, must naturally have regarded with dismay the advance of a political heresy, whose path they saw strewed over with the broken talismans of rank and authority. Many, too, with a disinterested reverence for ancient institutions, trembled to see them thus approached by rash hands, whose talents for ruin were sufficiently certain, but whose powers of reconstruction were yet to be tried. On the other hand, the easy triumph of a people over their oppressors was an example which could not fail to excite the hopes of the many as actively as the fears of the few. The great problem of the natural rights of mankind seemed about to be solved in a manner most flattering to the majority;—the zeal of the lover of liberty was kindled into enthusiasm, by a conquest achieved for his cause upon an arena so vast, and many, who before would have smiled at the doctrine of human perfectibility, now imagined they saw, in what the Revolution performed and promised, almost enough to sanction the indulgence of that splendid dream. It was natural, too, that the greater portion of that unemployed, and, as it were, homeless talent, which, in all great communities, is ever abroad on the wing, uncertain where to settle, should now swarm round the light of the new principles,—while all those obscure but ambitious spirits, who felt their aspirings clogged by the medium in which they were sunk, would as naturally welcome such a state of political effervescence, as might enable them, like enfranchised air, to mount at once to the surface.

Amidst all these various interests, imaginations, and fears, which were brought to life by the dawn of the French Revolution, it is not surprising that errors and excesses, both of conduct and opinion, should be among the first products of so new and sudden a movement of the whole civilized world;—that the friends of popular rights, presuming upon the triumph that had been gained, should,

in the ardour of pursuit, push on the vanguard of their principles, somewhat farther than was consistent with prudence and safety; or that, on the other side, Authority and its supporters, alarmed by the inroads of the revolutionary spirit, should but the more stubbornly intrench themselves in established abuses, and make the dangers they apprehended from liberty a pretext for assailing its very existence.

It was not long before these effects of the French Revolution began to show themselves very strikingly in the politics of England; and, singularly enough, the two extreme opinions, to which, as I have just remarked, that disturbing event gave rise, instead of first appearing, as might naturally be expected, the one on the side of Government, and the other on that of the Opposition, both broke out simultaneously in the very heart of the latter body.

On such an imagination as that of Burke, the scenes now passing in France were every way calculated to make a most vivid impression. So susceptible was he, indeed, of such impulses, and so much under the control of the imaginative department of his intellect, that, whatever might have been the accidental mood of his mind, at the moment when this astounding event first burst upon him, it would most probably have acted as a sort of mental catalepsy, and fixed his reason in the very attitude in which it found it. He had, however, been prepared for the part which he now took by much more deep and grounded causes. It was rather from circumstances than from choice, or any natural affinity, that Mr. Burke had ever attached himself to the popular party in politics. There was, in truth, nothing democratic about him but his origin;—his tastes were all on the side of the splendid and the arbitrary. The chief recommendation of the cause of India to his fancy and his feelings was that it involved the fate of antient dynasties, and invoked retribution for the downfall of thrones and princedoms, to which his imagination, always most affected by objects at a distance, lent a state and splendour that did not, in sober reality, belong to them. Though doomed to make Whiggism his habitual haunt, he took his perch at all times on its loftiest branches, as far as possible away from popular contact: and upon most occasions, adopted a sort of baronial view of liberty, as rather a question lying between the Throne and the Aristocracy, than one in which the people had a right to any efficient voice or agency. Accordingly, the question of Parliamentary Reform, from the first moment of its agitation, found in him a most decided opponent.

This inherent repugnance to popular principles became naturally heightened into impatience and disgust, by the long and fruitless warfare which he had waged under their banner, and the uniform

ill success with which they had blasted all his struggles for wealth and power. Nor was he in any better temper with his associates in the cause, — having found that the ascendancy which he had formerly exercised over them, and which, in some degree, consoled him for the want of official dominion, was of late considerably diminished, if not wholly transferred to others. Sheridan, as has been stated, was the most prominent object of his jealousy;— and it is curious to remark how much, even in feelings of this description, the aristocratical bias of his mind betrayed itself. For, though Mr. Fox, too, had overtaken and even passed him in the race, assuming that station in politics which he himself had previously held, yet so paramount did those claims of birth and connection, by which the new leader came recommended, appear in his eyes, that he submitted to be superseded by him, not only without a murmur, but cheerfully. To Sheridan, however, who had no such hereditary passport to pre-eminence, he could not give way without heart-burning and humiliation; and to be supplanted thus by a rival son of earth seemed no less a shock to his superstitious notions about rank, than it was painful to his feelings of self-love and pride.

Such, as far as can be ascertained by a distant observer of those times, was the temper in which the first events of the Revolution found the mind of this remarkable man;—and, powerfully as they would, at any time, have appealed to his imagination and prejudices, the state of irritability to which he had been wrought by the causes already enumerated peculiarly predisposed him, at this moment, to give way to such impressions without restraint, and even to welcome, as a timely relief to his pride, the mighty vent thus afforded to the "*splendida bilis*" with which it was charged.

There was indeed much to animate and give a zest to the new part which he now took. He saw those principles, to which he owed a deep grudge, for the time and the talents he had wasted in their service, now embodied in a shape so wild and alarming, as seemed to justify him, on grounds of public safety, in turning against them the whole powers of his mind, and thus enabled him, opportunely, to dignify desertion, by throwing the semblance of patriotism and conscientiousness round the reality of defection and revenge. He saw the party, too, who, from the moment they had ceased to be ruled by him, were associated only in his mind with recollections of unpopularity and defeat, about to adopt a line of politics which his long knowledge of the people of England, and his sagacious foresight of the consequences of the French Revolution, fully convinced him would lead to the same barren and mortifying results. On the contrary, the cause to which he proffered his alliance,

would, he was equally sure, by arraying on its side all the rank, riches, and religion of Europe, enable him at length to feel that sense of power and triumph, for which his domineering spirit had so long panted in vain. In this latter hope, indeed, of a speedy triumph over Jacobinism, his temperament, as was often the case, outran his sagacity; for, while he foresaw clearly that the dissolution of social order in France would at last harden into a military tyranny, he appeared not to be aware that the violent measures which he recommended against her would not only hasten this formidable result, but bind the whole mass of the people into union and resistance during the process.

Lastly—to these attractions, of various kinds, with which the cause of Thrones was now encircled in the eyes of Burke, must be added one, which, however it may still further disenchant our views of his conversion, cannot wholly be omitted among the inducements to his change,—and this was the strong claim upon the gratitude of government, which his seasonable and powerful advocacy in a crisis so difficult established for him, and which the narrow and embarrassed state of his circumstances rendered an object by no means of secondary importance in his views. Unfortunately,—from a delicate wish, perhaps, that the reward should not appear to come in too close coincidence with the service,—the pension bestowed upon him arrived too late to admit of his deriving much more from it than the obloquy by which it was accompanied.

The consequence, as is well known, of the new course taken by Burke was that the speeches and writings which he henceforward produced, and in which, as usual, his judgment was run away with by his temper, form a complete contrast, in spirit and tendency, to all that he had put on record in the former part of his life. He has, indeed, left behind him two separate and distinct armouries of opinion, from which both Whig and Tory may furnish themselves with weapons, the most splendid, if not the most highly tempered, that ever Genius and Eloquence have condescended to bequeath to Party. He has thus too, by his own personal versatility, attained, in the world of politics, what Shakspeare, by the versatility of his characters, achieved for the world in general,—namely, such a universality of application to all opinions and purposes, that it would be difficult for any statesman of any party to find himself placed in any situation, for which he could not select some golden sentence from Burke, either to strengthen his position by reasoning, or illustrate and adorn it by fancy. While, therefore, our respect for the man himself is diminished by this want of moral identity observable through his life and writings, we are but the more disposed to admire that unrivalled genius, which could thus throw

itself out in so many various directions with equal splendour and vigour. In general, political deserters lose their value and power in the very act, and bring little more than their treason to the new cause which they espouse:—

"*Fortis in armis*
Cæsaris Labienus erat; nunc transfuga vilis."

But Burke was mighty in either camp; and it would have taken *two* great men to effect what he, by this division of himself, achieved. His mind, indeed, lies parted asunder in his works, like some vast continent severed by a convulsion of nature,—each portion peopled by its own giant race of opinions, differing altogether in features and language, and committed in eternal hostility with each other.

It was during the discussions on the Army estimates, at the commencement of the Session of 1790, that the difference between Mr. Burke and his party in their views of the French Revolution first manifested itself. Mr. Fox having taken occasion to praise the late conduct of the French Guards in refusing to obey the dictates of the Court, and having declared that he exulted, "both from feelings and from principles," in the political change that had been brought about in that country, Mr. Burke, in answering him, entered fully and, it must be owned, most luminously into the question,—expressing his apprehension lest the example of France, which had, at a former period, threatened England with the contagion of despotism, should now be the means of introducing among her people the no less fatal taint of democracy and atheism. After some eloquent tributes of admiration to Mr. Fox, rendered more animated, perhaps, by the consciousness that they were the last offerings thrown into the open grave of their friendship, he proceeded to deprecate the effects which the language of his Right Honourable Friend might have, in appearing to countenance the disposition observable among "some wicked persons" to "recommend an imitation of the French spirit of Reform, and then added a declaration, equally remarkable for the insidious charge which it implied against his own party, and the notice of his approaching desertion which it conveyed to the other,—that "so strongly opposed was he to any the least tendency towards the *means* of introducing a democracy like that of the French, as well as to the *end* itself, that, much as it would afflict him, if such a thing should be attempted, and that any friend of his could concur in such measures (he was far, very far from believing they could), he would abandon his best friends, and join with his worst enemies to oppose either the means or the end."

It is pretty evident, from these words, that Burke had already made up his mind as to the course he should pursue, and but delayed his declaration of a total breach, in order to prepare the minds of the public for such an event, and, by waiting to take advantage of some moment of provocation, make the intemperance of others responsible for his own deliberate schism. The reply of Mr. Fox was not such as could afford this opportunity;—it was, on the contrary, full of candour and moderation, and repelled the implied charge of being a favourer of the new doctrines of France in the most decided, but at the same time, most conciliatory terms.

"Did such a declaration," he asked, "warrant the idea that he was a friend to Democracy? He declared himself equally the enemy of all absolute forms of government, whether an absolute Monarchy, an absolute Aristocracy, or an absolute Democracy. He was adverse to all extremes, and a friend only to a mixed government like our own, in which, if the Aristocracy, or indeed either of the three branches of the Constitution, were destroyed, the good effect of the whole and the happiness derived under it would, in his mind, be at an end."

In returning, too, the praises bestowed upon him by his friend, he made the following memorable and noble acknowledgment of all that he himself had gained by their intercourse:—

"Such (he said) was his sense of the judgment of his Right Honourable Friend, such his knowledge of his principles, such the value which he set upon them, and such the estimation in which he held his friendship, that if he were to put all the political information which he had learned from books, all which he had gained from science, and all which any knowledge of the world and its affairs had taught him, into one scale, and the improvement which he had derived from his Right Honourable Friend's instruction and conversation were placed in the other, he should be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference."

This, from a person so rich in acquirements as Mr. Fox, was the very highest praise,—nor, except in what related to the judgment and principles of his friend, was it at all exaggerated. The conversation of Burke must have been like the procession of a Roman triumph, exhibiting power and riches at every step—occasionally, perhaps, mingling the low Fescennine jest with the lofty music of its march, but glittering all over with the spoils of the whole ransacked world.

Mr. Burke in reply, after reiterating his praises of Mr. Fox, and the full confidence which he felt in his moderation and sagacity, professed himself perfectly satisfied with the explanations that had been given. The conversation would thus have passed off without any explosion, had not Sheridan, who was well aware that against him, in particular, the charge of a tendency to the adoption of

French principles was directed, risen immediately after, and by a speech warmly in favour of the Revolution and of the National Assembly, at once lighted the train in the mind of Burke, and brought the question, as far as regarded themselves, to an immediate issue.

"He differed," he said, "decidedly, from his Right Honourable Friend in almost every word that he had uttered respecting the French Revolution. He conceived it to be as just a Revolution as ours, proceeding upon as sound a principle and as just a provocation. He vehemently defended the general views and conduct of the National Assembly. He could not even understand what was meant by the charges against them of having overturned the laws, the justice, and the revenues of their country. What were their laws? the arbitrary mandates of capricious despotism. What their justice? the partial adjudications of venal magistrates. What their revenue? national bankruptcy. This he thought the fundamental error of his Right Honourable Friend's argument, that he accused the National Assembly of creating the evils, which they had found existing in full deformity at the first hour of their meeting. The public creditor had been defrauded; the manufacturer was without employ; trade was languishing; famine clung upon the poor; despair on all. In this situation, the wisdom and feelings of the nation were appealed to by the government; and was it to be wondered at by Englishmen, that a people, so circumstanced, should search for the cause and source of all their calamities, or that they should find them in the arbitrary constitution of their government, and in the prodigal and corrupt administration of their revenues? For such an evil, when proved, what remedy could be resorted to, but a radical amendment of the frame and fabric of the Constitution itself? This change was not the object and wish of the National Assembly only; it was the claim and cry of all France, united as one man for one purpose."

All this is just and unanswerable—as indeed was the greater part of the sentiments which he uttered. But he seems to have failed, even more signally than Mr. Fox, in endeavouring to invalidate the masterly view which Burke had just taken of the Revolution of 1688, as compared, in its means and object, with that of France. There was, in truth, but little similarity between them,—the task of the former being to preserve liberty, that of the latter to destroy tyranny; the one being a regulated movement of the Aristocracy against the Throne for the Nation, the other a tumultuous rising of the whole Nation against both for itself.

The reply of Mr. Burke was conclusive and peremptory,—such in short, as might be expected from a person, who came prepared to take the first plausible opportunity of a rupture. He declared that "henceforth His Honourable Friend and he were separated in politics,"—complained that his arguments had been cruelly misrepresented, and that "the Honourable Gentleman had thought

proper to charge him with being the advocate of despotism." Having endeavoured to defend himself from such an imputation, he concluded by saying,—

"Was that a fair and candid mode of treating his arguments? or was it what he ought to have expected *in the moment of departed friendship?* On the contrary, was it not evident that the Honourable Gentleman had made a sacrifice of his friendship, for the sake of catching some momentary popularity? If the fact were such, even greatly as he should continue to admire the Honourable Gentleman's talents, he must tell him that his argument was chiefly an argument *ad invidiam*, and all the applause for which he could hope from clubs was scarcely worth the sacrifice which he had chosen to make for so insignificant an acquisition."

I have given the circumstances of this Debate somewhat in detail, not only on account of its own interest and of the share which Mr. Sheridan took in it, but from its being the first scene of that great political schism which, in the following year, assumed a still more serious aspect, and by which the policy of Mr. Pitt at length acquired a predominance, not speedily to be forgotten in the annals of this country.

Mr. Sheridan was much blamed for the unseasonable stimulant which, it was thought, his speech on this occasion had administered to the temper of Burke; nor can it be doubted that he had thereby, in some degree accelerated the public burst of that feeling which had so long been treasured up against himself. But, whether hastened or delayed, such a breach was ultimately inevitable; the divergence of the parties once begun, it was in vain to think of restoring their parallelism. That some of their friends, however, had more sanguine hopes appears from an effort which was made, within two days after the occurrence of this remarkable scene, to effect a reconciliation between Burke and Sheridan. The interview that took place on that occasion is thus described by Mr. Dennis O'Brien, one of the persons chiefly instrumental in the arrangements for it:—

"It appeared to the author of this pamphlet [1] that the difference between these two great men would be a great evil to the country and to their own party. Full of this persuasion he brought them both together the second night after the original contest in the House of Commons; and carried them to Burlington House to Mr. Fox and the Duke of Portland, according to a previous arrangement. This interview, which can never be forgotten by those who were present, lasted from ten o'clock at night until three in the morning, and afforded a very remarkable display of the extraordinary talents of the parties."

It will easily be believed that to the success of this conciliatory

[1] Entitled "Utrum Horum."

effort the temper on one side would be a greater obstacle than even the hate on both. Mr. Sheridan, as if anxious to repel from himself the suspicion of having contributed to its failure, took an opportunity, during his speech upon the Tobacco Act, in the month of April following, to express himself in the most friendly terms of Mr. Burke as "one, for whose talents and personal virtue he had the highest esteem, veneration, and regard, and with whom he might be allowed to differ in opinion upon the subject of France, persuaded as he was that they never could differ in principle." Of this and some other compliments of a similar nature, Mr. Burke did not deign to take the slightest notice—partly, from an implacable feeling towards him who offered them, and partly, perhaps, from a suspicion that they were intended rather for the ears of the public than his own, and that, while this tendency to conciliation appeared on the surface, the under-current of feeling and influence set all the other way.

Among the measures which engaged the attention of Mr. Sheridan during this session, the principal was a motion of his own for the repeal of the Excise Duties on Tobacco, which appears to have called forth a more than usual portion of his oratory,—his speeches upon the subject occupying nearly forty pages. It is upon topics of this unpromising kind, and from the very effort, perhaps, to dignify and enliven them, that the peculiar characteristics of an orator are sometimes most racily brought out. To the Cider Tax we are indebted for one of the grandest bursts of the constitutional spirit and eloquence of Lord Chatham; and in these orations of Sheridan upon Tobacco, we find examples of the two extreme varieties of his dramatic talent—both of the broad, natural humour of his farce, and the pointed, artificial wit of his comedy. For instance, in representing, as one of the abuses that might arise from the discretionary power of remitting fines to manufacturers, the danger that those only should feel the indulgence, who were found to be supporters of the existing administration[1], he says:—

"Were a man, whose stock had increased or diminished beyond the standard table in the Act, to attend the Commissioners, and assure them that the weather alone had caused the increase or decrease of the article, and that no fraud whatever had been used on the occasion, the Commissioners might say to him, 'Sir, you need not give yourself so much trouble to prove your innocence;—we see honesty in your orange cape.' But should a person of quite a different side in politics attend for the same purpose, the Commissioners might say, 'Sir, you are not to be believed; we see fraud in your blue and buff, and it is impossible that you should not be a smuggler.'"

[1] A case of this kind formed the subject of a spirited speech of Mr. Windham, in 1792. See his Speeches, vol. i. p. 207.

Again, in stating the case between the manufacturers and the Minister, the former of whom objected to the Bill altogether, while the latter determined to preserve its principle and only alter its form, he says :—

"The manufacturers ask the Right Honourable Gentleman, if he will consent to give up the principle? The Right Honourable Gentleman answers, 'No; the principle must not be abandoned, but do you inform me how I shall alter the Bill.' This the manufacturers refused: and they wisely refused it in his opinion; for, what was it but the Minister's saying, 'I have a yoke to put about your necks,—do you help me in fitting it on —only assist me with your knowledge of the subject, and I'll fit you with the prettiest pair of fetters that ever were seen in the world.'"

As a specimen of his quaint and far sought witticisms, the following passage in the same speech may vie with Trip's "Post-Obit on the blue and silver, etc."—Having described the effects of the weather in increasing or decreasing the weight of the stock, beyond the exact standard established in the Act, he adds,

"The Commissioners, before they could, in justice, levy such fines, ought to ascertain that the weather is always in that precise state of heat or cold which the Act supposed it would be. They ought to make Christmas give security for frost, take a bond for hot weather from August, and oblige damps and fogs to take out permits."

It was in one of these speeches on the Tobacco Act, that he adverted with considerable warmth to a rumour, which, he complained had been maliciously circulated, of a misunderstanding between himself and the Duke of Portland, in consequence (as the Report expresses it) of "a certain opposition affirmed to have been made by this Noble Duke, to some views or expectations which he (Mr. Sheridan) was said to have entertained." After declaring that "there was not in these rumours one grain of thruth," he added that—

"He would not venture to state to the Committee the opinion that the Noble Duke was pleased to entertain of him, lest he should be accused of vanity in publishing what he might deem highly flattering. All that he would assert on this occasion was, that if he had it in his power to make the man whose good opinion he should most highly prize think flatteringly of him, he would have that man think of him precisely as the Noble Duke did, and then his wish on that subject would be most amply gratified."

As it is certain, that the feelings which Burke entertained towards Sheridan were in some degree shared by all those who afterwards seceded from the party, this boast of the high opinion of the Duke of Portland must be taken with what, in Heraldry, is called *Abatement*—that is, a certain degree of diminution of the emblazonry.

Among the papers of Mr. Sheridan, I find a letter addressed to him this year by one of his most distinguished friends, relative to the motions that had lately been brought forward for the relief of the Dissenters. The writer, whose alarm for the interest of the Church had somewhat disturbed his sense of liberality and justice, endeavours to impress upon Mr. Sheridan, and through him upon Mr. Fox, how undeserving the Dissenters were, as a political body, of the recent exertions on their behalf, and how ungratefully they had more than once requited the services which the Whigs had rendered them. For this latter charge there was but too much foundation in truth, however ungenerous might be the deduction which the writer would draw from it. It is, no doubt, natural that large bodies of men, impatiently suffering under the ban of disqualification, should avail themselves, without much regard to persons or party, of every aid they can muster for their cause, and should (to use the words of an old Earl of Pembroke) "lean on both sides of the stairs to get up." But, it is equally natural that the occasional desertion and ingratitude, of which, in pursuit of this selfish policy they are but too likely to be guilty towards their best friends, should, if not wholly indispose the latter to their service, at least considerably moderate their zeal in a cause, where all parties alike seem to be considered but as instruments, and where neither personal predilections nor principle are regarded in the choice of means. To the great credit, however, of the Whig party, it must be said, that, though often set aside and even disowned by their clients, they have rarely suffered their high duty, as advocates, to be relaxed or interrupted by such momentary suspensions of confidence. In this respect, the cause of Ireland has more than once been a trial of their constancy. Even Lord North was able, by his reluctant concessions, to supersede them for a time in the favour of my too believing countrymen,—whose despair of finding justice at any hands has often led them thus to carry their confidence to market, and to place it in the hands of the first plausible bidder. The many vicissitudes of popularity which their own illustrious Whig, Grattan, had to encounter, would have wearied out the ardour of any less magnanimous champion. But high minds are as little affected by such unworthy returns for services, as the sun is by those fogs which the earth throws up between herself and his light.

With respect to the Dissenters, they had deserted Mr. Fox in his great struggle with the Crown in 1784, and laid their interest and hopes at the feet of the new idol of the day. Notwithstanding this, we find him, in the year 1787, warmly maintaining, and in opposition to his rival, the cause of the very persons who had contributed to make that rival triumphant,—and showing just so much remem-

brance of their late defection as served to render this sacrifice of personal to public feelings more signal. "He was determined," he said, "to let them know that, though they could upon some occasions lose sight of their principles of liberty, he would not upon any occasion lose sight of his principles of toleration." In the present session, too, notwithstanding that the great organ of the Dissenters, Dr. Price, had lately in a sermon, published with a view to the Test, made a pointed attack on the morals of Mr. Fox and his friends, this generous advocate of religious liberty not the less promptly acceded to the request of the body, that he would bring the motion for their relief before the House.

On the 12th of June, the Parliament was dissolved,—and Mr. Sheridan again succeeded in being elected for Stafford. The following letters, however, addressed to him by Mrs. Sheridan during the election, will prove that they were not without some apprehensions of a different result. The letters are still more interesting, as showing how warmly alive to each other's feelings the hearts of both husband and wife could remain, after the long lapse of near twenty years, and after trials more fatal to love than even time itself.

"This letter will find you, my dear Dick, I hope, encircled with honours at Stafford. I take it for granted you entered it triumphantly on Sunday,—but I am very impatient to hear the particulars, and of the utter discomfiture of S—and his followers. I received your note from Birmingham this morning, and am happy to find that you and my dear cub were well, so far on your journey. You could not be happier than I should be in the proposed alteration for Tom, but we will talk more of this when we meet. I sent you Cartwright yesterday, and to-day I pack you off Perry with the soldiers. I was obliged to give them four guineas for their expenses. I send you likewise, by Perry, the note from Mrs. Crewe, to enable you to speak of your qualification if you should be called upon. So I think I have executed all your commissions, Sir; and if you want any of these doubtful votes which I mentioned to you, you will have time enough to send for them, for I would not let them go till I hear they can be of any use.

"And, now for my journal, Sir, which I suppose you expect. Saturday, I was at home all day busy for you,—kept Mrs. Reid to dinner,—went to the Opera,—afterwards to Mrs. St. John's, where I lost my money sadly, Sir,—eat strawberries and cream for supper,—sat between Lord Salisbury and Mr. Meynell, (hope you approve of that, Sir,)—overheard Lord Salisbury advise Miss Boyle by no means to subscribe to Taylor's Opera, as O'Reilly's would certainly have the patent,—confess I did not come home till past two. Sunday, called on Lady Julia,—father and Mr. Reid to dinner,—in the evening at Lady Hampden's,—lost my money again, Sir, and came home by one o'clock. 'Tis now near one o'clock,—my father is established in my boudoir, and when I have finished this, I am going with him to hear Abbé Vogler play on the Stafford organ. I have promised to dine with Mrs. Crewe,

who is to have a female party only, — no objection to that I suppose, Sir? Whatever the party do, I shall do of course, — I suppose it will end in Mrs. Hobart's. Mr. James told me on Saturday, and I find it is the report of the day, that Bond Hopkins is gone to Stafford. I am sorry to tell you there is an opposition at York, — Mr. Montague opposes Sir William Milner. Mr. Beckford has given up at Dover, and Lord ** is so provoked at it, that he has given up too, though they say they were both sure. St. Ives is gone for want of a candidate. Mr. Barham is beat at Stockbridge. Charles Lenox has offered for Surry, and they say Lord Egremont might drive him to the deuce, if he would set any body up against him. You know, I suppose, Mr. Crewe has likewise an opponent. I am sorry to tell you all this bad news, and, to complete it, Mr. Adam is sick in bed, and there is nobody to do any good left in town.

"I am more than ever convinced we must look to other resources for wealth and independence, and consider politics merely as an amusement, — and in that light 'tis best to be in Opposition, which I am afraid we are likely to be for some years again.

"I see the rumours of war still continue. — Stocks continue to fall — is that good or bad for the Ministers? The little boys are come home to me to-day. I could not help showing in my answer to Mr. T.'s letter, that I was hurt at his conduct, — so I have got another flummery letter, and the boys, who (as he is pretty sure) will be the best peace-makers. God bless you, my dear Dick. I am very well, I assure you; pray don't neglect to write to your ever affectionate,

"E. S."

"My dearest Dick, *Wednesday.*

"I am full of anxiety and fright about you, — I cannot but think your letters are very alarming. Deuce take the Corporation! is it impossible to make them resign their pretensions, and make peace with the Burgesses? I have sent Thomas after Mr. Cocker. I suppose you have sent for the out-votes; but, if they are not good, what a terrible expense will that be! — however, they are ready. I saw Mr. Cocker yesterday, — he collected them together last night, and gave them a treat, — so they are in high good humour. I inclose you a letter which B. left here last night. — I could not resist opening it. Every thing seems going wrong, I think. I thought he was not to do any thing in your absence. — It strikes me the bad business he mentions was entirely owing to his own stupidity, and want of a little patience, — is it of much consequence? I don't hear that the report is true of Basilico's arrival; — a messenger came to the Spanish embassy, which gave rise to this tale, I believe.

"If you were not so worried, I should scold you for the conclusion of your letter to-day. Might not I as well accuse you of coldness, for not filling your letter with professions, at a time when your head must be full of business? I think of nothing all day long, but how to do good, some how or other, for you. I have given you a regular Journal of my time, and all to please you, — so don't, dear Dick, lay so much stress on words. I should use them oftener, perhaps, but I feel as if it would look like deceit. You know me well enough, to be sure that I can never do what I'm bid, Sir, — but pray, don't think I meant to send you a cold letter, for indeed nothing was ever farther from my heart.

"You will see Mr. Horne Tooke's advertisement to day in the papers;—what do you think of that, to complete the thing? Bishop Dixon has just called from the hustings:—he says, the late Recorder, Adair, proposed Charles with a good speech, and great applause,—Captain Berkeley, Lord Hood, with a bad speech, not much applauded; and then Horne Tooke came forward, and, in the most impudent speech that ever was heard, proposed himself,—abused both the candidates, and said he should have been ashamed to have sat and heard such ill-deserved praises given him. But he told the crowd that, since so many of these fine virtues and qualifications had never yet done them the least good, they might as well now choose a candidate without them. He said, however, that if they were sincere in their professions of standing alone, he was sure of coming in, for they must all give him their second votes. There was an amazing deal of laughing and noise in the course of his speech. Charles Fox attempted to answer him, and so did Lord Hood,—but they would hear neither, and they are now polling away.

"Do, my dearest love, if you have possibly time, write me a few more particulars, for your letters are very unsatisfactory, and I am full of anxiety. Make Richardson write,—what has he better to do? God bless thee, my dear, dear Dick,—would it were over and all well! I am afraid, at any rate, it will be ruinous work.

"Ever your true and affectionate,

"E. S."

"*Near five.* I am just come from the hustings:—the state of the poll when I left it was, Fox, 260; Hood, 75; Horne Tooke, 17! But he still persists in his determination of polling a man an hour for the whole time. I saw Mr. Wilkes go up to vote for Tooke and Hood, amidst the hisses and groans of a multitude."

"*Friday.*

"My poor Dick, how you are worried! This is the day,—you will easily guess how anxious I shall be; but you seem pretty sanguine yourself, which is my only comfort, for Richardson's letter is rather croaking. You have never said a word of little Monkton:—has he any chance, or none? I ask questions without considering that, before you receive this, every thing will be decided—I hope triumphantly for you. What a sad set of venal rascals your favourites the Blacks must be, to turn so suddenly from their professions and promises! I am half sorry you have any thing more to do with them, and more than ever regret you did not stand for Westminster with Charles, instead of Lord John;—in that case you would have come in now, and we should not have been persecuted by this Horne Tooke. However, it is the dullest contested election that ever was seen—no canvassing, no houses open, no cockades. But I heard that a report prevails now, that Horne Tooke polling so few the two or three first days is an artful trick to put the others off their guard, and that he means to pour in his votes on the last days, when it will be too late for them to repair their neglect. But I don't think it possible, either, for such a fellow to beat Charles in Westminster.

"I have just had a note from Reid—he is at Canterbury—the state of the poll there, Thursday night, was as follows:—Gipps, 220; Lord**, 211

Sir T. Honeywood, 216; Mr. Warton, 163. We have got two members for Wendover, and two at Ailsbury. Mr. Barham is beat at Stockbridge. Mr. Tierney says he shall be beat, owing to Bate Dudley's manœuvres, and the Dissenters having all forsaken him,—a set of ungrateful wretches. E. Fawkener has just sent me a state of the poll at Northampton, as it stood yesterday, when they adjourned to dinner:—Lord Compton, 160; Bouverie, 98; Colonel Manners, 72. They are in hopes Mr. Manners will give up. This is all my news, Sir.

"We had a very pleasant musical party last night at Lord Erskine's, where I supped. I am asked to dine to-day with Lady Palmerston, at Sheen; but I can't go, unless Mrs. Crewe will carry me, as the coach is gone to have its new lining. I have sent to ask her, for 'tis a fine day, and I should like it very well. God thee bless, my dear Dick.

"Yours ever, true and affectionate,

"E. S."

"Duke of Portland has just left me:—he is full of anxiety about you: this is the second time he has called to enquire."

Having secured his own election, Mr. Sheridan now hastened to lend his aid, where such a lively reinforcement was much wanted, on the hustings at Westminster. The contest here was protracted to the 2d of July; and it required no little exercise both of wit and temper to encounter the cool personalities of Tooke, who had not forgotten the severe remarks of Sheridan upon his pamphlet the preceding year, and who, in addition to his strong powers of sarcasm, had all those advantages which, in such a contest, contempt for the courtesies and compromises of party warfare gives. Among other sallies of his splenetic humour it is related, that Mr. Fox having, upon one occasion, retired from the hustings, and left to Sheridan the task of addressing the multitude, Tooke remarked, that such was always the practice of quack-doctors, who, whenever they quit the stage themselves, make it a rule to leave their merry-andrews behind[1].

The French Revolution still continued, by its comet-like course, to dazzle, alarm and disturb all Europe. Mr. Burke had published his celebrated "Reflections" in the month of November, 1790; and never did any work, with the exception, perhaps, of the Eikon Basilike, produce such a rapid, deep and general sensation. The Eikon was the book of a King, and this might, in another sense, be called the Book of Kings. Not only in England, but throughout all Europe, in every part of which monarchy was now trembling

[1] Tooke, it is said, upon coming one Monday morning to the hustings, was thus addressed by a partizan of his opponent, not of a very reputable character:—"Well, Mr. Tooke, you will have all the blackguards with you to-day."—"I am delighted to hear it, Sir." (said Tooke, bowing,) "and from such good authority."

for its existence,—this lofty appeal to loyalty was heard and welcomed. Its effect upon the already tottering Whig party was like that of "the Voice," in the ruins of Rome, "disparting towers." The whole fabric of the old Rockingham confederacy shook to its base. Even some, who afterwards recovered their equilibrium, at first yielded to the eloquence of this extraordinary book,—which, like the æra of chivalry, whose loss it deplores, mixes a grandeur with error, and throws a charm round political superstition, that will long render its pages a sort of region of Royal romance, to which fancy will have recourse for illusions that have lost their last hold on the reason.

The undisguised freedom with which Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan expressed every where their opinions of this work and its principles had, of course, no small influence on the temper of the author, and, while it confirmed him in his hatred and jealousy of the one, prepared him for the breach which he meditated with the other. This breach was now, indeed, daily expected, as a natural sequel to the rupture with Mr. Sheridan in the last session; but, by various accidents and interpositions, the crisis was delayed till the 6th of May, when the recommitment of the Quebec Bill,—a question, upon which both orators had already taken occasion to unfold their views of the French Revolution,—furnished Burke with an opportunity, of which he impetuously took advantage, to sever the tie between himself and Mr. Fox for ever.

This scene,—so singular in a public assembly, where the natural affections were but seldom called out, and where, though bursts of temper like that of Burke are common, such tears as those shed by Mr. Fox are rare phænomena,—has been so often described in various publications, that it would be superfluous to enter into the details of it here. The following are the solemn and stern words in which sentence of death was pronounced upon a friendship, that had now lasted for more than the fourth part of a century. "It certainly," said Mr. Burke, "was indiscretion at any period, but especially at his time of life, to provoke enemies, or to give his friends occasion to desert him; yet, if his firm and steady adherence to the British Constitution placed him in such a dilemma, he would risk all, and, as public duty and public prudence taught him, with his last words exclaim, 'Fly from the French Constitution.'" [Mr. Fox here whispered, that "there was no loss of friendship."] Mr. Burke said, "Yes, there *was* a loss of friendship;—he knew the price of his conduct;—he had done his duty at the price of his friend;—their friendship was at an end."

In rising to reply to the speech of Burke, Mr. Fox was so affected as to be for some moments unable to speak:—he wept, it is said,

even to sobbing; and persons who were in the gallery at the time declare, that, while he spoke, there was hardly a dry eye around them.

Had it been possible for two natures so incapable of disguise—the one from simplicity and frankness, the other from ungovernable temper,—to have continued in relations of amity, notwithstanding their disagreement upon a question which was at that moment setting the world in arms, both themselves and the country would have been the better for such a compromise between them. Their long habits of mutual deference would have mingled with and moderated the discussion of their present differences;—the tendency to one common centre to which their minds had been accustomed, would have prevented them from flying so very widely asunder; and both might have been thus saved from those extremes of principle, which Mr. Burke always, and Mr. Fox sometimes, had recourse to in defending their respective opinions, and which, by lighting, as it were, the torch at both ends, but hastened a conflagration in which liberty herself might have been the sufferer. But it was evident that such a compromise would have been wholly impossible. Even granting that Mr. Burke did not welcome the schism as a relief, neither the temper of the men nor the spirit of the times, which converted opinions at once into passions, would have admitted of such a peaceable counterbalance of principles, nor suffered them long to slumber in that hollow truce, which Tacitus has described, —"*manente in speciem amicitia.*" Mr. Sheridan saw this from the first; and, in hasarding that vehement speech by which he provoked the rupture between himself and Burke, neither his judgment nor his temper were so much off their guard as they who blamed that speech seemed inclined to infer. But, perceiving that a separation was in the end inevitable, he thought it safer, perhaps, as well as manlier, to encounter the extremities at once, than by any temporizing delay, or too complaisant suppression of opinion, to involve both himself and Mr. Fox in the suspicion of either sharing or countenancing that spirit of defection, which, he saw, was fast spreading among the rest of their associates.

It is indeed said, and with every appearance of truth, that Mr. Sheridan had felt offended by the censures which some of his political friends had pronounced upon the indiscretion (as it was called) of his speech in the last year, and that, having, in consequence, withdrawn from them the aid of his powerful talents during a great part of the present session, he but returned to his post under the express condition, that he should be allowed to take the earliest opportunity of repeating, fully and explicitly, the same avowal of his sentiments.

The following letter from Dr. Parr to Mrs. Sheridan, written immediately after the scene between Burke and Sheridan in the preceding year, is curious :—

"Dear Madam,

"I am most fixedly and most indignantly on the side of Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Fox against Mr. Burke. It is not merely French politics that produced this dispute;—they might have been settled privately. No, no,—there is jealousy lurking underneath;—jealousy of Mr. Sheridan's eloquence;—jealousy of his popularity;—jealousy of his influence with Mr. Fox;—jealousy, perhaps, of his connection with the Prince.

"Mr. Sheridan was, I think, not too warm; or, at least, I should have myself been warmer. Why, Burke accused Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan of acts leading to rebellion,—and he made Mr. Fox a dupe, and Mr. Sheridan a traitor! I think *this*,—and I am sure, yes, positively sure, that nothing else will allay the ferment of mens' minds. Mr. Sheridan ought, publicly in Parliament, to demand proof, or a retractation, of this horrible charge. Pitt's words never did the party half the hurt;—and, just on the eve of an election, it is worse. As to private bickerings, or private concessions and reconciliations, they are all nothing. In public all must be again taken up; for if drowned, the Public will say, and Pitt will insinuate, that the charge is well founded, and that they dare not provoke an enquiry.

"I know Burke is not addicted to giving up,—and so much the worse for him and his party. As to Mr. Fox's yielding, well had it been for all, all, all the party, if Mr. Fox had, now and then, stood out against Mr. Burke. The ferment and alarm are universal, and something must be done;—for it is a conflagration in which they must perish, unless it be stopped. All the papers are with Burke,—even the Foxite papers, which I have seen. I know his violence, and temper, and obstinacy of opinion, and—but I will not speak out, for, though I think him the greatest man upon the earth, yet, in politics I think him,—what he has been found, to the sorrow of those who act with him. He is incorrupt, I know; but his passions are quite headstrong[1], and age, and disappointment, and the sight of other men rising into fame and consequence, sour him. Pray tell me when they are reconciled,—though, as I said, it is nothing to the purpose without a public explanation.

"I am, dear Madam,

"Yours truly,

"S. Parr."

Another letter, communicated to me as having been written about this period to Sheridan by a gentleman, then abroad, who was well acquainted with the whole party, contains allusions to the breach, which make its introduction here not irrelevant :—

"I wish very much to have some account of the state of things with

[1] It was well said, (I believe, by Mr. Fox,) that it was lucky both for Burke and Windham that they took the Royal side on the subject of the French Revolution, as they would have got hanged on the other.

you that I can rely on. I wish to know how all my old companions and fellow-labourers do; if the club yet exists; if you and Richardson, and Lord John, and Ellis, and Lawrence, and Fitzpatrick, etc. meet and joke, and write as of old. What is become of Becket's, and the supper-parties, the *noctes cænæque?* Poor Burgoyne! I am sure you all mourned him as I did, particularly Richardson:—pray remember me affectionately to Richardson. It is a shame for you all, and I will say ungrateful in many of you, to have so totally forgotten me, and to leave me in ignorance of every thing public and private in which I am interested. The only creature who writes to me is the Duke of Portland; but in the great and weighty occupations that engross his mind, you can easily conceive that the little details of Society cannot enter into His Grace's correspondence. I have indeed carried on a pretty regular correspondence with young Burke. But that is now at an end. *He* is so wrapt up in the importance of his present pursuits, that it is too great an honour for me to continue to correspond with him. His father I ever must venerate and ever love; yet I never could admire, even in him, what his son has inherited from him, a tenacity of opinion and a violence of *principle*, that makes him lose his friendships in his politics, and quarrel with every one who differs from him. Bitterly have I lamented that greatest of these quarrels, and, indeed, the only important one: nor can I conceive it to have been less afflicting to my private feelings than fatal to the party. The worst of it to me was, that I was obliged to condemn the man I loved, and that all the warmth of my affection, and the zeal of my partiality, could not suggest a single excuse to vindicate him, either to the world or to myself, from the crime (for such it was) of giving such a triumph to the common enemy. He failed, too, in what I most loved him for,—his heart. There it was that *Mr. Fox principally rose above him;* nor, amiable as he ever has been, did he ever appear half so amiable as on that trying occasion."

The topic upon which Sheridan most distinguished himself during this Session was the meditated interference of England in the war between Russia and the Porte,—one of the few measures of Mr. Pitt on which the sense of the nation was opposed to him. So unpopular, indeed, was the Armament proposed to be raised for this object, and so rapidly did the majority of the Minister diminish during the discussion of it, that there appeared for some time a probability that the Whig party would be called into power,—an event which, happening at this critical juncture, might, by altering the policy of England, have changed the destinies of all Europe.

The circumstance to which at present this Russian question owes its chief hold upon English memories is the charge, arising out of it, brought against Mr. Fox of having sent Mr. Adair as his representative to Petersburgh, for the purpose of frustrating the objects for which the King's ministers were then actually negotiating. This accusation, though more than once obliquely intimated during the discussions upon the Russian Armament in 1791, first met the public

eye, in any tangible form, among those celebrated Articles of Impeachment against Mr. Fox, which were drawn up by Burke's practised hand [1] in 1793, and found their way surreptitiously into print in 1797. The angry and vindictive tone of this paper was but little calculated to inspire confidence in its statements, and the charge again died away, unsupported and unrefuted, till the appearance of the Memoirs of Mr. Pitt by the Bishop of Winchester; when, upon the authority of documents said to be found among the papers of Mr. Pitt, but not produced, the accusation was revived,—the Right Reverend biographer calling in aid of his own view of the transaction the charitable opinion of the Turks, who, he complacently assures us, "expressed great surprise that Mr. Fox had not lost his head for such conduct." Notwithstanding, however, this *Concordat* between the Right Reverend Prelate and the Turks, something more is still wanting to give validity to so serious an accusation. Until the production of the alleged proofs (which Mr. Adair has confidently demanded) shall have put the public in possession of more recondite materials for judging, they must regard as satisfactory and conclusive the refutation of the whole charge, both as regards himself and his illustrious friend, which Mr. Adair has laid before the world; and for the truth of which not only his own high character, but the character of the ministries of both parties, who have since employed him in missions of the first trust and importance, seem to offer the strongest and most convincing pledges.

The Empress of Russia, in testimony of her admiration of the eloquence of Mr. Fox on this occasion, sent an order to England, through her ambassador, for a bust of that statesman, which it was her intention, she said, to place between those of Demosthenes and Cicero. The following is a literal copy of Her Imperial Majesty's note on the subject [2]:—

"Ecrivez au Cte. Worenzof qu'il me fasse avoir en marbre blanc le buste ressemblant de Charles Fox. Je veux le mettre sur ma colonnade entre ceux de Démosthène et de Cicéron.

"Il a délivré par son éloquence sa patrie et la Russie d'une guerre à laquelle il n'y avait ni justice ni raison."

Another subject that engaged much of the attention of Mr. Sheridan this year was his own motion relative to the constitution of the

[1] This was the third time that his talent for impeaching was exercised, as he acknowledged having drawn up, during the administration of Lord North, seven distinct Articles of Impeachment against that nobleman, which, however, the advice of Lord Rockingham induced him to relinquish.

[2] Found among Mr. Sheridan's papers, with these words, in his own handwriting, annexed:—"N. B. Fox would have lost it, if I had not made him look for it, and taken a copy."

Royal Scotch Boroughs. He had been, singularly enough, selected, in the year 1787, by the Burgesses of Scotland, in preference to so many others possessing more personal knowledge of that country, to present to the House the Petition of the Convention of Delegates, for a Reform of the internal government of the Royal Boroughs. How fully satisfied they were with his exertions in their cause may be judged by the following extract from the Minutes of Convention, dated 11th August, 1791 :—

" Mr. Mills of Perth, after a suitable introductory speech, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Sheridan, in the following words :—

" The Delegates of the Burgesses of Scotland, associated for the purposes of Reform, taking into their most serious consideration the important services rendered to their cause by the manly and prudent exertions of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq., the genuine and fixed attachment to it which the whole tenor of his conduct has evinced, and the admirable moderation he has all along displayed,

" Resolved unanimously, That the most sincere thanks of this meeting be given to the said Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq., for his steady, honourable, and judicious conduct in bringing the question relative to the violated rights of the Scottish Boroughs to its present important and favourable crisis; and the Burgesses with firm confidence hope that, from his attachment to the cause, which he has shown to be deeply rooted in principle, he will persevere to exert his distinguished abilities, till the objects of it are obtained, with that inflexible firmness, and constitutional moderation, which have appeared so conspicuous and exemplary throughout the whole of his conduct, as to be highly deserving of the imitation of all good citizens.

" John Ewen, Secretary."

From a private letter written this year by one of the Scottish Delegates to a friend of Mr. Sheridan, (a copy of which letter I have found among the papers of the latter,) it appears that the disturbing effects of Mr. Burke's book had already shown themselves so strongly among the Whig party as to fill the writer with apprehensions of their defection, even on the safe and moderate question of Scotch Reform. He mentions one distinguished member of the party, who afterwards stood conspicuously in the very van of the Opposition, but who at that moment, if the authority of the letter may be depended upon, was, like others, under the spell of the great Alarmist, and yielding rapidly to the influence of that anti-revolutionary terror, which, like the Panic dignified by the ancients with the name of one of their Gods, will be long associated in the memories of Englishmen with the mighty name and genius of Burke. A consultation was, however, held among this portion of the party, with respect to the prudence of lending their assistance to the measure of Scotch Reform; and Sir James Mackintosh, as I have heard him say, was in

company with Sheridan, when Dr. Lawrence came direct from the meeting, to inform him that they had agreed to support his motion.

The state of the Scotch Representation is one of those cases, where a dread of the ulterior objects of Reform induces many persons to oppose its first steps, however beneficial and reasonable they may deem them, rather than risk a further application of the principle, or open a breach by which a bolder spirit of innovation may enter. As it is, there is no such thing as popular election in Scotland. We cannot, indeed, more clearly form to ourselves a notion of the manner in which so important a portion of the British empire is represented, than by supposing the Lords of the Manor throughout England to be invested with the power of electing her representatives,—the manorial rights, too, being, in a much greater number of instances than at present, held independently of the land from which they derive their claim, and thus the natural connection between property and the right of election being, in most cases, wholly separated. Such would be, as nearly as possible, a parallel to the system of representation now existing in Scotland;—a system, which it is the understood duty of all present and future Lord Advocates to defend, and which neither the lively assaults of a Sheridan, nor the sounder reasoning and industry of an Abercrombie, have yet been able to shake.

The following extract from another of the many letters of Dr. Parr to Sheridan shows still further the feeling entertained towards Burke, even by some of those who most violently differed with him:—

"During the recess of Parliament I hope you will read the mighty work of my friend and your friend, and Mr. Fox's friend, Mackintosh. there is some obscurity and there are many Scotticisms in it; yet I do pronounce it the work of a most masculine and comprehensive mind. The arrangement is far more methodical than Mr. Burke's, the sentiments are more patriotic, the reasoning is more profound, and even the imagery in some places is scarcely less splendid. I think Mackintosh a better philosopher, and a better citizen, and I know him to be a far better scholar, and a far better man, than Payne; in whose book there are great irradiations of genius, but none of the glowing and generous warmth which virtue inspires; that warmth which is often kindled in the bosom of Mackintosh, and which pervades almost every page in Mr. Burke's book—though I confess, and with sorrow I confess, that the holy flame was quite extinguished in his odious altercation with you and Mr. Fox."

A letter from the Prince of Wales to Sheridan this year furnishes a new proof of the confidence reposed in him by His Royal Highness. A question of much delicacy and importance having arisen between that Illustrious Personage and the Duke of York, of a nature, as it

appears, too urgent to wait for a reference to Mr. Fox, Sheridan had alone the honour of advising His Royal Highness in the correspondence that took place between him and his Royal Brother on that occasion. Though the letter affords no immediate clue to the subject of these communications, there is little doubt that they referred to a very important and embarrassing question, which is known to have been put by the Duke of York to the Heir Apparent, previously to his own marriage this year;—a question, which involved considerations connected with the Succession to the Crown, and which the Prince, with the recollection of what occurred on the same subject in 1787, could only get rid of by an evasive answer.

CHAPTER XV.

Death of Mrs. Sheridan.

In the year 1792, after a long illness, which terminated in consumption, Mrs. Sheridan died at Bristol, in the thirty-eighth year of her age.

There has seldom, perhaps, existed a finer combination of all those qualities that attract both eye and heart than this accomplished and lovely person exhibited. To judge by what we hear, it was impossible to see her without admiration, or know her without love; and a late Bishop used to say that she "seemed to him the connecting link between woman and angel[1]." The devotedness of affection, too, with which she was regarded, not only by her own father and sisters, but by all her husband's family, showed that her fascination was of that best kind which, like charity, "begins at home;" and that, while her beauty and music enchanted the world, she had charms more intrinsic and lasting for those who came nearer to her. We have already seen with what pliant sympathy she followed her husband through his various pursuits,—identifying herself with the politician as warmly and readily as with the author, and keeping Love still attendant on Genius through all his transformations. As the wife of the dramatist and manager, we find her calculating the receipts of the house, assisting in the adaptation of her husband's opera, and reading over the plays sent in by dramatic candidates. As the wife of the senator and orator we see her, with no less zeal, making extracts from state-papers, and copying out ponderous pamphlets,—entering with all her heart and soul into the details of elections, and even endeavouring to fathom the mysteries of the

[1] Jackson of Exeter, too, giving a description of her, in some Memoirs of his own Life that were never published, said that to see her, as she stood singing beside him at the piano-forte, was "like looking into the face of an angel."

Funds. The affectionate and sensible care with which she watched over, not only her own children, but those which her beloved sister, Mrs. Tickell, confided to her, in dying, gives the finish to this picture of domestic usefulness. When it is recollected, too, that the person thus homelily employed was gifted with every charm that could adorn and delight society, it would be difficult, perhaps, to find any where a more perfect example of that happy mixture of utility and ornament, in which all that is prized by the husband and the lover combines, and which renders woman what the Sacred Fire was to the Parsees,—not only an object of adoration on their altars, but a source of warmth and comfort to their hearths.

To say that, with all this, she was not happy, nor escaped the censure of the world, is but to assign to her that share of shadow, without which nothing bright ever existed on this earth. United not only by marriage, but by love, to a man who was the object of universal admiration, and whose vanity and passions too often led him to yield to the temptations by which he was surrounded, it was but natural that, in the consciousness of her own power to charm, she should be now and then piqued into an appearance of retaliation, and seem to listen with complacence to some of those numerous worshippers who crowd around such beautiful and unguarded shrines. Not that she was at any time unwatched by Sheridan;—on the contrary, he followed her with a lover's eyes throughout; and it was believed of both, by those who knew them best, that, even when they seemed most attracted by other objects, they would willingly, had they consulted the real wishes of their hearts, have given up every one in the world for each other. So wantonly do those, who have happiness in their grasp, trifle with that rare and delicate treasure, till, like the careless hand playing with a rose,

> "In swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas,
> They snap it—it falls to the ground."

They had, immediately after their marriage, as we have seen, passed some time in a little cottage at Eastburnham, and it was a period, of course, long remembered by them both for its happiness. I have been told by a friend of Sheridan, that he once overheard him exclaiming to himself, after looking for some moments at his wife, with a pang, no doubt, of melancholy self-reproach,—"Could any thing bring back those first feelings?" then adding, with a sigh, "Yes, perhaps, the cottage at Eastburnham might." In this, as well as in some other traits of the same kind, there is assuredly any thing but that common place indifference, which too often clouds over the evening of married life. On the contrary, it seems rather the struggle of affection with its own remorse; and,

like the humourist who mourned over the extinction of his intellect so eloquently as to prove that it was still in full vigour, shows love to be still warmly alive in the very act of lamenting its death.

I have already presented the reader with some letters of Mrs. Sheridan, in which the feminine character of her mind very interestingly displays itself. Their chief charm is unaffectedness, and the total absence of that literary style which, in the present day, infects even the most familiar correspondence. I shall here give a few more of her letters, written at different periods to the elder sister of Sheridan,—it being one of her many merits to have kept alive between her husband and his family, though so far separated, a constant and cordial intercourse, which, unluckily, after her death, from his own indolence and the new connections into which he entered, was suffered to die away, almost entirely. The first letter, from its allusion to the Westminster Scrutiny, must have been written in the year 1784, Mr. Fox having gained his great victory over Sir Cecil Wray on the 17th of May, and the Scrutiny having been granted on the same day.

"My dear Lissy, *London, June* 6.

"I am happy to find by your last that our apprehensions on Charles's account were useless. The many reports that were circulated here of his accident gave us a good deal of uneasiness; but it is no longer wonderful that he should be buried here, when Mr. Jackman has so barbarously murdered him with you. I fancy he would risk another broken head, rather than give up his title to it as an officer of the Crown. We go on here wrangling as usual, but I am afraid all to no purpose. Those who are in possession of power are determined to use it without the least pretence to justice or consistency. They have ordered a Scrutiny for Westminster, in defiance of all law or precedent, and without any other hope or expectation but that of harassing and tormenting Mr. Fox and his friends, and obliging them to waste their time and money, which perhaps they think might otherwise be employed to a better purpose in another cause. We have nothing for it but patience and perseverance, which I hope will at last be crowned with success, though I fear it will be a much longer trial than we at first expected. I hear from every body that your. . . . . are vastly disliked,—but are you not all kept in awe by such beauty? I know she flattered herself to subdue all your Volunteers by the fire of her eyes only:—how astonished she must be to find they have not yet laid down their arms! There is nothing would tempt me to trust my sweet person upon the water sooner than the thoughts of seeing you; but I fear my friendship will hardly ever be put to so hard a trial. Though Sheridan is not in office, I think he is more engaged by politics than ever.

"I suppose we shall not leave town till September. We have promised to pay many visits, but I fear we shall be obliged to give up many of our schemes, for I take it for granted Parliament will meet again as soon as

possible. We are to go to Chatsworth, and to another friend of mine in that neighbourhood, so that I doubt our being able to pay our annual visit to Crewe Hall. Mrs Crewe has been very ill all this winter with your old complaint, the rheumatism:—she is gone to Brightelmstone to wash it away in the sea. Do you ever see Mrs. Greville? I am glad to hear my two nephews are both in so thriving a way. Are your still a nurse? I should like to take a peep at your bantlings. Which is the handsomest? have you candour enough to think any thing equal to your own boy?—if you have, you have more merit than I can claim. Pray remember me kindly to Bess, Mr. L., etc. and don't forget to kiss the little squaller for me when you have nothing better to do. God bless you.

"Ever yours."

"The inclosed came to Dick in one of Charles's franks: he said he should write to you himself with it, but I think it safest not to trust him."

In another letter, written in the same year, there are some touches both of sisterly and of conjugal feeling, which seem to bespeak a heart happy in all its affections.

"My Dear Lissy, *Putney, August*, 16.

"You will no doubt be surprised to find me still dating from this place, but various reasons have detained me here from day to day, to the great dissatisfaction of my dear Mary, who has been expecting me hourly for the last fortnight. I propose going to Hampton-Court to-night, if Dick returns in any decent time from town.

"I got your letter and a half the day before yesterday, and shall be very well pleased to have such blunders occur more frequently. You mistake, if you suppose I am a friend to your tarrers and featherers:—it is such wretches that always ruin a good cause. There is no reason on earth why you should not have a new Parliament as well as us:—it might not, perhaps, be quite as convenient to our immaculate Minister, but I sincerely hope he will not find your Volunteers so accommodating as the present India troops in our House of Commons. What! does the Secretary at War condescend to reside in any house but his own?—'Tis very odd he should turn himself out of doors in his situation. I never could perceive any economy in dragging furniture from one place to another; but, of course, he has more experience in these matters than I have.

"Mr. Forbes dined here the other day, and I had a great deal of conversation with him on various subjects relating to you all. He says, Charles's manner of talking of his wife, etc. is so ridiculous, that whenever he comes into company, they always cry out,—'Now, S—n, we allow you half an hour to talk of the beauties of Mrs. S., half an hour to your child, and another half hour to your farm, and then we expect you will behave like a reasonable person.'

"So Mrs.—— is not happy:—poor thing, I dare say, if the truth were known, he teazes her to death. Your *very good* husbands generally contrive to make you sensible of their merit some how or other.

"From a letter Mr. Canning has just got from Dublin, I find you have

been breaking the heads of some of our English heroes. I have no doubt in the world that they deserved it; and if half a score more that I know had shared the same fate, it might, perhaps, become less the fashion among our young men to be such contemptible coxcombs as they certainly are.

"My sister desired me to say all sorts of affectionate things to you, in return for your kind remembrance of her in your last. I assure you, you lost a great deal by not seeing her in her maternal character:—it is the prettiest sight in the world to see her with her children:—they are both charming creatures, but my little namesake is my delight:—'tis impossible to say how foolishly fond of her I am. Poor Mary! she is in a way to have more, and what will become of them all is sometimes a consideration that gives me many a painful hour. But *they* are happy, with *their* little portion of the goods of this world:—then, what are riches good for? For my part, as you know, poor Dick and I have always been struggling against the stream, and shall probably continue to do so to the end of our lives,—yet we would not change sentiments or sensations with. . . . for all his estates. By the bye, I was told t'other day he was going to receive eight thousand pounds as a compromise for his uncle's estate, which has been so long in litigation:—is it true?—I dare say it is though, or he would not be so discontented as you say he is. God bless you.—Give my love to Bess, and return a kiss to my nephew for me. Remember me to Mr. L., and believe me

"Truly yours."

The following letters appear to have been written in 1785, some months after the death of her sister, Miss Maria Linley. Her playful allusions to the fame of her own beauty might have been answered in the language of Paris to Helen:—

"*Minor est tua gloria vero*
Famaque de forma pene maligna est."

"Thy beauty far outruns even rumour's tongue,
And envious fame leaves half thy charms unsung."

"My dear Lissy, "*Delapre Abbey, Dec.* 27.

"Notwithstanding your incredulity, I assure you I wrote to you from Hampton-Court, very soon after Bess came to England. My letter was a dismal one; for my mind was at that time entirely occupied by the affecting circumstance of my poor sister's death. Perhaps you lost nothing by not receiving my letter, for it was not much calculated to amuse you.

"I am still a recluse, you see, but I am preparing to *launch* for the winter in a few days. Dick was detained in town by a bad fever:—you may suppose I was kept in ignorance of his situation, or I should not have remained so quietly here. He came last week, and the fatigue of the journey very nearly occasioned a relapse:—but by the help of a jewel of a doctor that lives in this neighbourhood we are both quite stout, and well again (for I took it into my head to fall sick again, too, without rhyme or reason).

"We purpose going to town to-morrow or next day. Our own house

has been painting and papering, and the weather has been so unfavourable to the business, that it is probable it will not be fit for us to go into this month; we have, therefore, accepted a most pressing invitation of General Burgoyne to take up our abode with him, till our house is ready;—so your next must be directed to Bruton-Street, under cover to Dick, unless Charles will frank it again. I don't believe what you say of Charles's not being glad to have seen me in Dublin. You are very flattering in the reasons you give, but I rather think his vanity would have been more gratified by showing every body how much prettier and younger his wife was than the Mrs. Sheridan in whose favour they have been prejudiced by your good-natured partiality. If I could have persuaded myself to trust the treacherous ocean, the pleasure of seeing you and your nursery would have compensated for all the fame I should have lost by a comparison. But my guardian sylph, vainer of my beauty, perhaps, than myself, would not suffer me to destroy the flattering illusion *you* have so often displayed to your Irish friends. No,—I shall stay till I am past all pretensions, and then you may excuse your want of taste by saying, "Oh, if you had seen her when she was young!"

"I am very glad that Bess is satisfied with my attention to her. The unpleasant situation I was in prevented my seeing her as often as I could wish. For *her* sake I assure you I shall be glad to have Dick and your father on good terms, without entering into any arguments on the subject;—but I fear, where *one* of the parties, at least, has a *tincture* of what they call in Latin *damnatus obstinatus mulio*, the attempt will be difficult, and the success uncertain. God bless you; and believe me

"Truly yours."

"*Mrs. Lefanu, Great Cuff Street, Dublin.*

The next letter I shall give refers to the illness with which old Mr. Sheridan was attacked in the beginning of the year 1788, and of which he died in the month of August following. It is unnecessary to direct the reader's attention to the passages in which she speaks of her lost sister, Mrs. Tickell, and her children:—they have too much of the heart's best feelings in them to be passed over slightly.

"My dear Lissy, *London, April 5.*

"Your last letter I hope was written when you were low spirited, and consequently inclined to forbode misfortune. I would not show it to Sheridan:—he has lately been much harassed by business, and I could not bear to give him the pain I know your letter would have occasioned. Partial as your father has always been to Charles, I am confident *he* never has, nor ever will feel half the duty and affections that Dick has always exprest. I know how deeply he will be afflicted, if you confirm the melancholy account of his declining health;—but I trust your next will remove my apprehensions, and make it unnecessary for me to wound his affectionate heart by the intelligence. I flatter myself likewise, that you have been without reason alarmed about poor Bess. Her life, to be sure, must be dreadful;—but I should hope the good nature and kindness of her

disposition will support her, and enable her to continue the painful duty so necessary, probably, to the comfort of your poor father. If Charles has not or does not do every thing in his power to contribute to the happiness of the few years which nature can allow him, he will have more to answer to his conscience than I trust any of those dear to me will have. Mrs. Crewe told us, the other day, she had heard from Mr. Greville, that every thing was settled much to your father's satisfaction. I *will* hope, therefore, as I have said before, you were in a gloomy fit when you wrote, and in the mean time I will congratulate you on the recovery of your own health and that of your children.

"I have been confined now near two months:—I caught cold almost immediately on coming to town, which brought on all those dreadful complaints with which I was afflicted at Crewe-Hall. By constant attention and strict regimen I am once more got about again; but I never go out of my house after the sun is down, and on those terms only can I enjoy tolerable health. I never knew Dick better. My dear boy is now with me for his holydays, and a charming creature he is, I assure you, in every respect. My sweet little charge, too, promises to reward me for all my care and anxiety. The little ones come to me every day, though they do not at present live with me. We think of taking a house in the country this summer, as necessary for my health and convenient to S., who must be often in town. I shall then have *all* the children with me, as they now constitute a very great part of my happiness. The scenes of sorrow and sickness I have lately gone through have depressed my spirits, and made me incapable of finding pleasure in the amusements which used to occupy me perhaps too much. My greatest delight is in the reflection that I am acting according to the wishes of my ever dear and lamented sister, and that by fulfilling the sacred trust bequeathed me in her last moments, I insure my own felicity in the grateful affection of the sweet creatures,—whom, though I love for their own sakes, I idolise when I consider them as the dearest part of her who was the first and nearest friend of my heart!—God bless you, my dear Liss:—this is a subject that always carries me away. I will therefore bid you adieu,—only entreating you as soon as you can to send me a more comfortable letter. My kind love to Bess, and Mr. L.

"Yours, ever affectionately."

I shall give but one more letter; which is perhaps only interesting as showing how little her heart went along with the gaieties, into which her husband's connexion with the world of fashion and politics led her.

My dear Lissy, *May* 23.

"I have only time at present to write a few lines at the request of Mrs. Crewe, who is made very unhappy by an account of Mrs. Greville's illness, as she thinks it possible Mrs. G. has not confessed the whole of her situation. She earnestly wishes you would find out from Dr. Quin what the nature of her complaint is, with every other particular you can gather on the subject, and give me a line as soon as possible.

"I am very glad to find your father is better. As there has been a

recess lately from the Trial, I thought it best to acquaint Sheridan with his illness. I hope now, however, there is but little reason to be alarmed about him. Mr. Tickell has just received an account from Holland, that poor Mrs. Berkeley (whom you know best as Betty Tickell) was at the point of death in a consumption.

"I hope in a very short time now to get into the country. The Duke of Norfolk has lent us a house within twenty miles of London; and I am impatient to be once more out of this noisy, dissipated town, where I do nothing that I really like, and am forced to appear pleased with every thing odious to me. God bless you. I write in the hurry of dressing for a great ball given by the Duke of York to-night, which I had determined not to go to till late last night, when I was persuaded that it would be very improper to refuse a Royal invitation, if I was not absolutely confined by illness. Adieu. Believe me truly yours.

"You must pay for this letter, for Dick has got your last with the direction; and any thing in his hands is *irrecoverable!*"

The health of Mrs. Sheridan, as we see by some of her letters, had been for some time delicate; but it appears that her last fatal illness originated in a cold which she had caught in the summer of the preceding year. Though she continued from that time to grow gradually worse, her friends were flattered with the hope that as soon as her confinement should take place, she would be relieved from all that appeared most dangerous in her complaint. That event, however, produced but a temporary intermission of the malady, which returned after a few days with such increased violence, that it became necessary for her, as a last hope, to try the waters of Bristol.

The following affectionate letter of Tickell must have been written at this period:—

"My dear Sheridan,

"I was but too well prepared for the melancholy intelligence contained in your last letter, in answer to which, as Richardson will give you this, I leave it to his kindness to do me justice in every sincere and affectionate expression of my grief for your situation, and my entire readiness to obey and further your wishes by every possible exertion.

"If you have any possible opportunity, let me entreat you to remember me to the dearest, tenderest friend and sister of my heart. Sustain yourself, my dear Sheridan,

"And believe me yours,

"Most affectionately and faithfully,

"R. Tickell."

The circumstances of her death cannot better be told than in the language of a lady whose name it would be an honour to mention, who, giving up all other cares and duties, accompanied her dying friend to Bristol and devoted herself, with a tenderness rarely

equalled even among women, to the soothing and lightening of her last painful moments. From the letters written by this lady at the time, some extracts have lately been given by Miss Lefanu[1] in her interesting Memoirs of her grandmother, Mrs. Frances Sheridan. But their whole contents are so important to the characters of the persons concerned, and so delicately draw aside the veil from a scene of which sorrow and affection were the only witnesses, that I feel myself justified not only in repeating what has already been quoted, but in adding a few more valuable particulars, which, by the kindness of the writer and her correspondent, I am enabled to give from the same authentic source. The letters are addressed to Mrs. H. Lefanu, the second sister of Mr. Sheridan.

"*Bristol, June*, 1. 1792.

* *

"I am happy to have it in my power to give you any information on a subject so interesting to you, and to all that have the happiness of knowing dear Mrs. Sheridan; though I am sorry to add, it cannot be such as will relieve your anxiety, or abate your fears. The truth is, our poor friend is in a most precarious state of health, and quite given over by the faculty. Her physician here, who is esteemed very skilful in consumptive cases, assured me from the first that it was a *lost case*; but as your brother seemed unwilling to know the truth, he was not so explicit with him, and only represented her as being in a very critical situation. Poor man! he cannot bear to think her in danger himself, or that any one else should; though he is as attentive and watchful as if he expected every moment to be her last. It is impossible for any man to behave with greater tenderness, or to feel more on such an occasion, than he does.

* *

"At times the dear creature suffers a great deal from weakness and want of rest. She is very patient under her sufferings, and perfectly resigned. She is well aware of her danger, and talks of dying with the greatest composure. I am sure it will give you and Mr. Lefanu pleasure to know that her mind is well prepared for any change that may happen, and that she derives every comfort from religion that a sincere Christian can look for."

On the 28th of the same month Mrs. Sheridan died; and a letter from this lady, dated July 19th, thus touchingly describes her last

[1] The talents of this young lady are another proof of the sort of *gavel-kind* of genius allotted to the whole race of Sheridan. I find her very earliest poetical work, "The Sylphid Queen," thus spoken of in a letter from the second Mrs. Sheridan to her mother, Mrs. Lefanu:—"I should have acknowledged your very welcome present immediately, had not Mr. Sheridan, on my telling him what it was, run off with it, and I have been in vain endeavouring to get it from him ever since. What little I did read of it, I admired particularly; but it will be much more gratifying to you and your daughter to hear that *he* read it with the greatest attention, and thought it showed a great deal of imagination."

moments. As a companion-picture to the close of Sheridan's own life, it completes a lesson of the transitoriness of this world, which might sadden the hearts of the beautiful and gifted, even in their most brilliant and triumphant hours. Far happier, however, in her death than he was, she had not only his affectionate voice to soothe her to the last, but she had one devoted friend, out of the many whom she had charmed and fascinated, to watch consolingly over her last struggle, and satisfy her as to the fate of the beloved objects which she left behind.

"*July*, 19, 1792.

"Our dear departed friend kept her bed only two days, and seemed to suffer less during that interval than for some time before. She was perfectly in her senses to the last moment, and talked with the greatest composure of her approaching dissolution; assuring us all that she had the most perfect confidence in the mercies of an all-powerful and merciful Being, from whom alone she could have derived the inward comfort and support she felt at that awful moment! She said, she had no fear of death, and that all her concern arose from the thoughts of leaving so many dear and tender ties, and of what they would suffer from her loss. Her own family were at Bath, and had spent one day with her, when she was tolerably well. Your poor brother now thought it proper to send for them, and to flatter them no longer. They immediately came:—it was the morning before she died. They were introduced one at a time at her bedside, and were prepared as much as possible for this sad scene. The women bore it very well, but all our feelings were awakened for her poor father. The interview between him and the dear angel was afflicting and heart-breaking to the greatest degree imaginable. I was afraid she would have sunk under the cruel agitation:—she said it was indeed too much for her. She gave some kind injunction to each of them, and said every thing she could to comfort them under this severe trial. They then parted, in the hope of seeing her again in the evening, but they never saw her more! Mr. Sheridan and I sat up all that night with her;—indeed he had done so for several nights before, and never left her one moment that could be avoided. About four o'clock in the morning we perceived an alarming change, and sent for her physician [1]. She said to

[1] This physician was Dr. Bain, then a very young man, whose friendship with Sheridan began by this mournful duty to his wife, and only ended with the performance of the same melancholy office for himself. As the writer of the above letters was not present during the interview which she describes between him and Mrs. Sheridan, there are a few slight errors in her account of what passed, the particulars of which, as related by Dr. Bain himself, are as follows:—On his arrival, she begged of Sheridan and her female friend to leave the room, and then, desiring him to lock the door after them, said, "You have never deceived me:—tell me truly, shall I live over this night." Dr. Bain immediately felt her pulse, and, finding that she was dying, answered, "I recommend you to take some laudanum;" upon which she replied, "I understand you:—then give it me."

Dr. Bain fully concurs with the writer of these letters in bearing testimony to

him, 'If you can relieve me, do it quickly;—if not, do not let me struggle, but give me some laudanum.' His answer was, 'Then I will give you some laudanum.' She desired to see Tom and Betty Tickell before she took it, of whom she took a most affecting leave! Your brother behaved most wonderfully, though his heart was breaking; and at times his feelings were so violent, that I feared he would have been quite ungovernable at the last. Yet he summoned up courage to kneel by the bedside, till he felt the last pulse of expiring excellence, and then withdrew. She died at five o'clock in the morning, 28th of June.

"I hope, my dear Mrs. Lefanu, you will excuse my dwelling on this most agonising scene. I have a melancholy pleasure in so doing, and fancy it will not be disagreeable to you to hear all the particulars of an event so interesting, so afflicting, to all who knew the beloved creature! For my part, I never beheld such a scene—never suffered such a conflict—much as I have suffered on my own account. While I live, the remembrance of it and the dear lost object can never be effaced from my mind.

"We remained ten days after the event took place at Bristol; and on the 7th instant Mr. Sheridan and Tom, accompanied by all her family (except Mrs. Linley), Mr. and Mrs. Leigh, Betty Tickell and myself, attended the dear remains [1] to Wells, where we saw her laid beside her beloved sister in the Cathedral. The choir attended; and there was such a concourse of people of all sorts assembled on the occasion that we could hardly move along. Mr. Leigh read the service in a most affecting manner. Indeed the whole scene, as you may easily imagine, was awful and affecting to a very great degree; though the crowd certainly interrupted the solemnity very much, and, perhaps, happily for us abated somewhat of our feelings, which, had we been less observed, would not have been so easily kept down.

"The day after the sad scene was closed we separated, your brother chusing to be left by himself with Tom for a day or two. He afterwards joined us at Bath, where we spent a few days with our friends, the Leighs.

the tenderness and affection that Sheridan evinced on this occasion:—it was, he says, quite "the devotedness of a lover." The following note, addressed to him after the sad event was over, does honour alike to the writer and the receiver:—

"My dear Sir,

"I must request your acceptance of the inclosed for your professional attendance. For the kind and friendly attentions, which have accompanied your efforts, I must remain your debtor. The recollection of them will live in my mind with the memory of the dear lost object, whose sufferings you soothed, and whose heart was grateful for it.

"Believe me,

"Dear Sir,

"Very sincerely yours,

"R. B. Sheridan."

"*Friday night.*

[1] The following striking reflection, which I have found upon a scrap of paper, in Sheridan's hand-writing, was suggested, no doubt, by his feelings on this occasion:

"The loss of the breath from a beloved object, long suffering in pain and certainly to die, is not so great a privation as the last loss of her beautiful remains, if they remain so. The victory of the Grave is sharper than the Sting of Death."

Last Saturday we took leave of them, and on Sunday we arrived at Isleworth, where, with much regret, I left your brother to his own melancholy reflections, with no other companions but his two children, in whom he seems at present entirely wrapped up. He suffered a great deal in returning the same road, and was most dreadfully agitated on his arrival at Isleworth. His grief is deep and sincere, and I am sure will be lasting. He is in very good spirits, and at times is even cheerful, but the moment he is left alone he feels all the anguish of sorrow and regret. The dear little girl is the greatest comfort to him:—he cannot bear to be a moment without her. She thrives amazingly, and is indeed a charming little creature. Tom behaves with constant and tender attention to his father:—he laments his dear mother sincerely, and at the time was violently affected;—but, at his age, the impressions of grief are not lasting; and his mind is naturally too lively and cheerful to dwell long on melancholy objects. He is in all respects truly amiable, and in many respects so like his dear, charming mother, that I am sure he will be ever dear to my heart. I expect to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Sheridan again next week, when I hope to find him more composed than when I took leave of him last Sunday."

To the mention which is made, in this affecting letter, of the father of Mrs. Sheridan, whose destiny it had been to follow to the grave, within a few short years, so many of his accomplished children [1], I must add a few sentences more from another letter of the same lady, which, while they increase our interest in this amiable and ingenious man, bear testimony to Sheridan's attaching powers, and prove how affectionate he must have been to her who was gone, to be thus loved by the father to whom she was so dear:—

"Poor Mr. Linley has been here among us these two months. He is very much broke, but is still a very interesting and agreeable companion. I do not know any one more to be pitied than he is. It is evident that the recollection of past misfortunes preys on his mind [2], and he has no

[1] In 1778 his eldest son Thomas was drowned, while amusing himself in a pleasure-boat at the seat of the Duke of Ancaster. The pretty lines of Mrs. Sheridan to his violin are well known. A few years after, Samuel, a lieutenant in the navy, was carried off by a fever. Miss Maria Linley died in 1785, and Mrs. Tickell in 1787.

I have erroneously stated, in a former part of this work, that Mr. William Linley is the only surviving branch of this family;—there is another brother, Mr. Ozias Linley, still living.

[2] In the Memoirs of Mrs. Crouch I find the following anecdote:—"Poor Mr. Linley! after the death of one of his sons, when seated at the harpsichord in Drury-Lane theatre, in order to accompany the vocal parts of an interesting little piece taken from Prior's Henry and Emma by Mr. Tickell, and excellently represented by Palmer and Miss Farren,—when the tutor of Henry, Mr. Aikin, gave an impressive description of a promising young man, in speaking of his pupil Henry, the feelings of Mr. Linley could not be suppressed. His tears fell fast—nor did he weep alone."

In the same work Mrs. Crouch is made to say that, after Miss Maria Linley

comfort in the surviving part of his family, they being all scattered abroad. Mr. Sheridan seems more his child than any one of his own, and I believe he likes being near him and his grand-children."

Towards the autumn (as we learn from another letter of this lady) Mr. Sheridan endeavoured to form a domestic establishment for himself at Wanstead.

"*Wanstead, October* 22, 1792.

"Your brother has taken a house in this village very near me, where he means to place his dear little girl, to be as much as possible under my protection. This was the dying request of my beloved friend; and the last effort of her mind and pen[1] was made the day before she expired, to draw up a solemn promise for both of us to sign, to ensure the strict performance of this last awful injunction: so anxious was she to commit this dear treasure to my care, well knowing how impossible it would be for a father, situated as your brother is, to pay that constant attention to her which a daughter so particularly requires. * * * You may be assured I shall engage in the task with the greatest delight and alacrity: — would to God that I were in the smallest degree qualified to supply the place of that angelic, all-accomplished mother, of whose tender care she has been so early deprived. All I *can* do for her, I *will* do; and if I can succeed so far as to give her early and steady principles of religion, and to form her mind to virtue, I shall think my time well employed, and shall feel myself happy in having fulfilled the first wish of her beloved mother's heart.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

died, it was melancholy for her to sing to Mr. Linley, whose tears continually fell on the keys as he accompanied her; and if, in the course of her profession, she was obliged to practise a song, which he had been accustomed to hear his lost daughter sing, the similarity of their manners and their voices which he had once remarked with pleasure, then affected him to such a degree, that he was frequently forced to quit the instrument, and walk about the room to recover his composure.

[1] There are some touching allusions to these last thoughts of Mrs. Sheridan, in an Elegy, written by her brother, Mr. William Linley, soon after the news of the sad event reached him in India:—

"Oh most beloved! my sister and my friend!
While kindred woes still breathe around thine urn,
Long with the tear of absence must *I* blend
The sigh, that speaks thou never shalt return.
* * * * * * * *

"'Twas Faith, that, bending o'er the bed of death,
Shot o'er thy pallid cheek a transient ray,
With softer effort soothed thy labouring breath,
Gave grace to anguish, beauty to decay.

"Thy friends, thy children, claim'd thy latest care;
Theirs was the last that to thy bosom clung;
For them to heaven thou sent'st the expiring prayer,
The last that falter'd on thy trembling tongue."

To return to your brother, he talks of having his house here immediately furnished and made ready for the reception of his nursery. It is a very good sort of common house, with an excellent garden, roomy and fit for the purpose, but will admit of no show or expense. I understand he has taken a house in Jermyn-Street, where he may see company; but he does not intend having any other country-house but this. Isleworth he gives up, his time being expired there. I believe he has got a private tutor for Tom—somebody very much to his mind. At one time he talked of sending him abroad with this gentleman, but I know not at present what his determinations are. He is too fond of Tom's society to let him go from him for any time; but I think it would be more to his advantage if he would consent to part with him for two or three years. It is impossible for any man to be more devotedly attached to his children than he is, and I hope they will be a comfort and a blessing to him when the world loses its charms. The last time I saw him, which was for about five minutes, I thought he looked remarkably well, and seemed tolerably cheerful. But I have observed in general that this affliction has made a wonderful alteration in the expression of his countenance and in his manners [1]. The Leighs and my family spent a week with him at Isleworth the beginning of August, where we were indeed most affectionately and hospitably entertained. I could hardly believe him to be the same man. In fact, we never saw him do the honours of his house before: *that*, you know, he always left to the dear, elegant creature, who never failed to please and charm every one who came within the sphere of her notice. Nobody could have filled her place so well: — he seemed to have pleasure in making much of those whom she loved and who, he knew, sincerely loved her. We all thought he never appeared to such advantage. He was attentive to every body and every thing, though grave and thoughtful; and his feelings, poor fellow, often ready to break forth in spite of his efforts to suppress them. He spent his evenings mostly by himself. He desired me, when I wrote, to let you know that she had by will made a little distribution of what she called "her own property," and had left you and your sister rings of remembrance, and her *fausse montre*, containing Mr. Sheridan's picture, to you [2], — Mrs. Joseph Lefanu having got hers. She left rings also to Mr. and Mrs. Leigh, my sister, daughter, and myself, and positively forbids any others being given on any pretence, but these I have specified,—evidently precluding all her *fine friends* from this last mark of her esteem and approbation. She had, poor thing, with some justice, turned from them all in disgust, and, I observed, during her illness, never mentioned any of them with regard or kindness."

The consolation which Sheridan derived from his little daughter

[1] I have heard a Noble friend of Sheridan say that, happening about this time to sleep in the room next to him, he could plainly hear him sobbing throughout the greater part of the night.

[2] This bequest is thus announced by Sheridan himself in a letter to his sister, dated June 3, 1794:—"I mean also to send by Miss Patrick a picture which has long been your property, by a bequest from one whose image is not often from my mind, and whose memory, I am sure, remains in yours."

was not long spared to him. In a letter, without a date, from the same amiable writer, the following account of her death is given :—

"The circumstances attending this melancholy event were particularly distressing. A large party of young people were assembled at your brother's to spend a joyous evening in dancing. We were all in the height of our merriment,—he himself remarkably cheerful, and partaking of the amusement, when the alarm was given that the dear little angel was dying! It is impossible to describe the confusion and horror of the scene: —he was quite frantic, and I knew not what to do. Happily there were present several kind, good-natured men, who had their recollection, and pointed out what should be done. We very soon had every possible assistance, and for a short time we had some hope that her precious life would have been spared to us — but that was soon at an end!

"The dear babe never throve to my satisfaction: — she was small and delicate beyond imagination, and gave very little expectation of long life; but she had visibly declined during the last month. * * * Mr. Sheridan made himself very miserable at first, from an apprehension that she had been neglected or mismanaged; but I trust he is perfectly convinced that this was not the case. He was severely afflicted at first. The dear babe's resemblance to her mother after her death was so much more striking, that it was impossible to see her without recalling every circumstance of that afflicting scene, and he was continually in the room indulging the sad remembrance. In this manner he indulged his feelings for four or five days; then, having indispensable business, he was obliged to go to London, from whence he returned, on Sunday, apparently in good spirits and as well as usual. But however he may assume the appearance of ease or cheerfulness, his heart is not of a nature to be quickly reconciled to the loss of any thing he loves. He suffers deeply and secretly; and I dare say he will long and bitterly lament both mother and child."

The reader will, I think, feel with me, after reading the foregoing letters, as well as those of Mrs. Sheridan, given in the course of this work, that the impression which they altogether leave on the mind is in the highest degree favourable to the characters both of husband and wife. There is, round the whole, an atmosphere of kindly, domestic feeling, which seems to answer for the soundness of the hearts that breathed in it. The sensibility, too, displayed by Sheridan at this period, was not that sort of passionate return to former feelings, which the prospect of losing what it once loved might awaken in even the most alienated heart;—on the contrary, there was a depth and mellowness in his sorrow which could proceed from long habits of affection alone. The idea, indeed, of seeking solace for the loss of the mother in the endearments of the children would occur only to one who had been accustomed to find happiness in his home, and who therefore clung for comfort to what remained of the wreck.

Such, I have little doubt, were the natural feelings and disposi-

tions of Sheridan; and if the vanity of talent too often turned him aside from their influence, it is but another proof of the danger of that "light which leads astray," and may console those who, safe under the shadow of mediocrity, are unvisited by such disturbing splendours.

The following letters on this occasion, from his eldest sister and her husband, are a further proof of the warm attachment which he inspired in those connected with him:—

"My dearest Brother,

"Charles has just informed me that the fatal, the dreaded event has taken place. On my knees I implore the Almighty to look down upon you in your affliction, to strengthen your noble, your feeling heart to bear it. Oh my beloved brother, these are sad, sad trials of fortitude. One consolation, at least, in mitigation of your sorrow, I am sure you possess,—the consciousness of having done all you could to preserve the dear angel you have lost, and to soften the last painful days of her mortal existence. Mrs. Canning wrote to me that she was in a resigned and happy frame of mind: she is assuredly among the blest; and I feel and I think she looks down with benignity at my feeble efforts to soothe that anguish I participate. Let me then conjure you, my dear brother, to suffer me to endeavour to be of use to you. Could I have done it, I should have been with you from the time of your arrival at Bristol. The impossibility of my going has made me miserable, and injured my health, already in a very bad state. It would give value to my life, could I be of that service I think I *might* be of, if I were near you; and as I cannot go to you, and as there is every reason for your quitting the scene and objects before you, perhaps you may let us have the happiness of having you here, and my dear Tom: I will write to him when my spirits are quieter. I entreat you, my dear brother, try what change of place can do for you: your character and talents are here held in the highest estimation; and you have here some who love you beyond the affection any in England can feel for you.

"*Cuff-Street, 4th July.* "A. Lefanu."

"My dear good Sir, *Wednesday, 4th July,* 1792.

"Permit me to join my entreaties to Lissy's to persuade you to come over to us. A journey might be of service to you, and change of objects a real relief to your mind. We would try every thing to divert your thoughts from too intensely dwelling on certain recollections, which are yet too keen and too fresh to be entertained with safety,—at least to occupy you too entirely. Having been so long separated from your sister, you can hardly have an adequate idea of her love for you. I, who on many occasions have observed its operation, can truly and solemnly assure you that it far exceeds any thing I could ever have supposed to have been felt by a sister towards a brother. I am convinced you would experience such soothing in her company and conversation as would restore you to yourself sooner than any thing that could be imagined.

Come then, my dear Sir, and be satisfied you will add greatly to her comfort, and to that of your very affectionate friend,

"J. LEFANU."

CHAPTER XVI.

Drury-Lane Theatre.—Society of "the Friends of the People."—Madame de Genlis.—War with France.—Whig Seceders.—Speeches in Parliament.—Death of Tickell.

THE domestic anxieties of Mr. Sheridan, during this year, left but little room in his mind for public cares. Accordingly, we find that, after the month of April, he absented himself from the House of Commons altogether. In addition to his apprehensions for the safety of Mrs. Sheridan, he had been for some time harassed by the derangement of his theatrical property, which was now fast falling into a state of arrear and involvement, from which it never after entirely recovered.

The Theatre of Drury-Lane having been, in the preceding year, reported by the surveyors to be unsafe and incapable of repair, it was determined to erect an entirely new house upon the same site; for the accomplishment of which purpose a proposal was made, by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Linley, to raise the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, by the means of three hundred debentures, of five hundred pounds each. This part of the scheme succeeded instantly; and I have now before me a list of the holders of the 300 shares, appended to the proposal of 1791, at the head of which the names of the three Trustees, in whom the Theatre was afterwards vested in the year 1793, stand for the following number of shares:—Albany Wallis, 20; Hammersley, 50; Richard Ford, 20. But, though the money was raised without any difficulty, the completion of the new building was delayed by various negotiations and obstacles, while, in the mean time, the company were playing, at an enormous expense, first in the Opera-House, and afterwards at the Haymarket-Theatre, and Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Linley were paying interest for the first instalment of the loan.

To these and other causes of the increasing embarrassments of Sheridan is to be added the extravagance of his own style of living, which became much more careless and profuse after death had deprived him of her, whose maternal thoughtfulness alone would have been a check upon such improvident waste. We are enabled to form some idea of his expensive habits, by finding, from the letters which have just been quoted, that he was, at the same time, maintaining three establishments,—one at Wanstead, where his son resided with his tutor; another at Isleworth, which he still held (as I learn from letters directed to him there) in 1793, and the third,

his town house, in Jermyn-Street. Rich and ready as were the resources which the Treasury of the theatre opened to him, and fertile as was his own invention in devising new schemes of finance, such mismanaged expenditure would exhaust even *his* magic wealth, and the lamp must cease to answer to the rubbing at last.

The tutor, whom he was lucky enough to obtain for his son at this time, was Mr. William Smythe, a gentleman who has since distinguished himself by his classical attainments and graceful talent for poetry. Young Sheridan had previously been under the care of Dr. Parr, with whom he resided a considerable time at Hatton, and the friendship of this learned man for the father could not have been more strongly shown than in the disinterestedness with which he devoted himself to the education of the son. The following letter from him to Mr. Sheridan, in the May of this year, proves the kind feeling by which he was actuated towards him:—

"Dear Sir,

"I hope Tom got home safe, and found you in better spirits. He said something about drawing on your banker; but I do not understand the process, and shall not take any step. You will consult your own convenience about these things; for my connection with you is that of friendship and personal regard. I feel and remember slights from those I respect, but acts of kindness I cannot forget; and, though my life has been passed far more in doing than receiving services, yet I know and I value the good dispositions of yourself and a few other friends,—men who are worthy of that name from me.

"If you choose Tom to return, he knows and you know how glad I am always to see him. If not, pray let him do something, and I will tell you what he should do.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"S. Parr."

In the spring of this year was established the Society of "The Friends of the People," for the express purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform. To this Association, which, less for its professed object than for the republican tendencies of some of its members, was particularly obnoxious to the loyalists of the day, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Grey, and many others of the leading persons of the Whig party, belonged. Their Address to the People of England, which was put forth in the month of April, contained an able and temperate exposition of the grounds upon which they sought for Reform; and the names of Sheridan, Mackintosh, Whitbread, etc., appear on the list of the Committee by which this paper was drawn up.

It is a proof of the little zeal which Mr. Fox felt at this period on the subject of Reform, that he withheld the sanction of his name

from a Society to which so many of his most intimate political friends belonged. Some notice was, indeed, taken in the House of this symptom of backwardness in the cause; and Sheridan, in replying to the insinuation, said that "they wanted not the signature of his Right Honourable Friend to assure them of his concurrence. They had his bond in the steadiness of his political principles and the integrity of his heart." Mr. Fox himself, however, gave a more definite explanation of the circumstance. "He might be asked," he said, "why his name was not on the list of the Society for Reform? His reason was, that though he saw great and enormous grievances, he did not see the remedy." It is to be doubted, indeed, whether Mr. Fox ever fully admitted the principle upon which the demand for a Reform was founded. When he afterwards espoused the question so warmly, it seems to have been merely as one of those weapons caught up in the heat of a warfare, in which Liberty itself appeared to him too imminently endangered to admit of the consideration of any abstract principle, except that summary one of the right of resistance to power abused. From what has been already said, too, of the language held by Sheridan on this subject, it may be concluded that, though far more ready than his friend to inscribe Reform upon the banner of the party, he had even still less made up his mind as to the practicability or expediency of the measure. Looking upon it as a question, the agitation of which was useful to Liberty, and at the same time counting upon the improbability of its objects being ever accomplished, he adopted at once, as we have seen, the most speculative of all the plans that had been proposed, and flattered himself that he thus secured the benefit of the general principle, without risking the inconvenience of any of the practical details.

The following extract of a letter from Sheridan to one of his female correspondents, at this time, will show that he did not quite approve the policy of Mr. Fox in holding aloof from the Reformers :—

"I am down here with Mrs. Canning and her family, while all my friends and party are meeting in town, where I have excused myself, to lay their wise heads together in this crisis. Again I say there is nothing but what is unpleasant before my mind. I wish to occupy and fill my thoughts with public matters, and, to do justice to the times, they afford materials enough; but nothing is in prospect to make activity pleasant, or to point one's efforts against one common enemy, making all that engage in the attack cordial, social, and united: on the contrary, every day produces some new schism and absurdity. Windham has signed a nonsensical association with Lord Mulgrave; and when I left town yesterday, I was informed that the *Divan*, as the meeting at Debrett's is called, were furious at an *authentic* advertisement from the Duke of

Portland against Charles Fox's speech in the Whig Club, which no one before believed to be genuine, but which they now say Dr. Lawrence brought from Burlington-House. If this is so, depend on it there will be a direct breach in what has been called the Whig Party. Charles Fox must come to the Reformers openly and avowedly; and in a month four-fifths of the whig Club will do the same."

The motion for the Abolition of the Slave-trade, brought forward this year by Mr. Wilberforce, (on whose brows it may be said, with much more truth than of the Roman General, "*Annexuit Africa lauros,*") was signalised by one of the most splendid orations that the lofty eloquence of Mr. Pitt ever poured forth '. I mention the Debate, however, for the mere purpose of remarking, as a singularity, that, often as this great question was discussed in Parliament, and ample as was the scope which it afforded for the grander appeals of oratory, Mr. Sheridan was upon no occasion tempted to utter even a syllable on the subject,—except once for a few minutes, in the year 1787, upon some point relating to the attendance of a witness. The two or three sentences, however, which he did speak on that occasion were sufficient to prove (what, as he was not a West-India proprietor, no one can doubt,) that the sentiments entertained by him on this interesting topic were, to the full extent, those which actuated not only his own party, but every real lover of justice and humanity throughout the world. To use a quotation which he himself applied to another branch of the question in 1807:—

> "I would not have a slave to till my ground,
> To fan me when I sleep, and tremble when
> I wake, for all that human sinews, bought
> And sold, have ever earn'd."

The National Convention having lately, in the first paroxysm of their republican vanity, conferred the honour of Citizenship upon several distinguished Englishmen, and, among others, upon Mr. Wilberforce and Sir James Mackintosh, it was intended, as appears by the following letter from Mr. Stone, (a gentleman subsequently brought into notice by the trial of his brother for High Treason,) to invest Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan with the same distinction, had not the prudent interference of Mr. Stone saved them from this very questionable honour.

The following is the letter which this gentleman addressed to Sheridan on the occasion.

' It was at the conclusion of this speech that, in contemplating the period when Africa would, he hoped, participate in those blessings of civilisation and knowledge which were now enjoyed by more fortunate regions, he applied the happy quotation, rendered still more striking, it is said, by the circumstance of the rising sun just then shining in through the windows of the House:—

> "*Nos . . . . primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,*
> *Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.*"

Paris, Nov. 18. Year I. of the French Republic.

"Dear Sir,

"I have taken a liberty with your name, of which I ought to give you notice, and offer some apology. The Convention, having lately enlarged their connections in Europe, are ambitious of adding to the number of their friends by bestowing some mark of distinction on those who have stood forth in support of their cause when its fate hung doubtful. The French conceive that they owe this obligation very eminently to you and Mr. Fox; and, to show their gratitude, the Committee appointed to make the Report has determined to offer to you and Mr. Fox the honour of Citizenship. Had this honour never been conferred before, had it been conferred only on worthy members of society, or were you and Mr. Fox only to be named at this moment, I should not have interfered. But as they have given the title to obscure and vulgar men and scoundrels, of which they are now very much ashamed themselves, I have presumed to suppose that you would think yourself much more honoured in the breach than the observance, and have therefore caused your nomination to be suspended. But I was influenced in this also by other considerations, of which one was, that, though the Committee would be more careful in their selection than the last had been, yet it was probable you would not like to share the honours with such as would be chosen. But another more important one that weighed with me was, that this new character would not be a small embarrassment in the route which you have to take the next session of Parliament, when the affairs of France must necessarily be often the subject of discussion. No one will suspect Mr. Wilberforce of being seduced, and no one has thought that he did any thing to render him liable to seduction; as his superstition and devotedness to Mr. Pitt have kept him perfectly *à l'abri* from all temptations to err on the side of liberty, civil or religious. But to you and Mr. Fox the reproach will constantly be made, and the blockheads and knaves in the House will always have the means of influencing the opinions of those without, by opposing with success your English character to your French one; and that which is only a mark of gratitude for past services, will be construed by malignity into a bribe of some sort for services yet to be rendered. You may be certain that, in offering the reasons for my conduct, I blush that I think it necessary to stoop to such prejudices. Of this, however, you will be the best judge, and I should esteem it a favour if you would inform me whether I have done right, or whether I shall suffer your names to stand as they did before my interference. There will be sufficient time for me to receive your answer, as I have prevailed on the Reporter, Mr. Brissot, to delay a few days. I have given him my reasons for wishing the suspension, to which he has assented. Mr. O'Brien also prompted me to this deed, and, if I have done wrong, he must take half the punishment. My address is, "Rose, Huissier," under cover of the President of the National Convention.

"I have the honour to be
"Your most obedient
"And most humble servant,
"J. H. Stone."

It was in the month of October of this year that the romantic adventure of Madame de Genlis (in the contrivance of which the practical humour of Sheridan may, I think, be detected,) occurred on the road between London and Dartford. This distinguished lady had, at the close of the year 1791, with a view of escaping the turbulent scenes then passing in France, come over with her illustrious pupil, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, and her adopted daughter, Pamela [1], to England, where she received, both from Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, all that attention which her high character for talent, as well as the embarrassing nature of her situation at that moment, claimed for her.

The following letter from her to Mr. Fox I find inclosed in one from the latter to Mr. Sheridan :—

"Sir,

"You have, by your infinite kindness, given me the right to show you the utmost confidence. The situation I am in makes me desire to have with me, during two days, a person perfectly well instructed in the Laws, and very sure and honest. I desire such a person that I could offer to him all the money he would have for this trouble. But there is not a moment to be lost on the occasion. If you could send me directly this person, you would render me the most important service. To calm the most cruel agitation of a sensible and grateful soul shall be your reward. — Oh could I see you but a minute!—I am uneasy, sick, unhappy; surrounded by the most dreadful snares of the fraud and wickedness; I am intrusted with the most interesting and sacred charge! — All these are my claims to hope your advices, protection and assistance. My friends are absent in that moment; there is only *two names* in which I could place my confidence and my hopes. Pardon this bad language. As Hypolite I may say,

"' *Songez que je vous parle une langue étrangère,*

but the feelings it expresses cannot be strangers to your heart.

"Sans avoir l'avantage d'être connue de Monsieur Fox, je prends la liberté de le supplier de communiquer cette lettre à Monsieur Shéridan;

[1] Married at Tournay in the mouth of December, 1792, to Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Lord Edward was the only one, among the numerous suitors of Mrs. Sheridan, to whom she is supposed to have listened with any thing like a return of feeling; and that there should be mutual admiration between two such noble specimens of human nature, it is easy, without injury to either of them, to believe.

Some months before her death, when Sheridan had been describing to her and Lord Edward a beautiful French girl whom he had lately seen, and added that she put him strongly in mind of what his own wife had been in the first bloom of her youth and beauty, Mrs. Sheridan turned to Lord Edward, and said with a melancholy smile, "I should like you, when I am dead, to marry that girl." This was Pamela, whom Sheridan had just seen during his visit of a few hours to Madame de Genlis at Bury, in Suffolk, and whom Lord Edward married in about a year after.

et si ce dernier n'est pas à Londres, j'ose espérer de Monsieur Fox la même bonté que j'attendois de Monsieur Shéridan dans l'embarras où je me trouve. Je m'adresse aux deux personnes de l'Angleterre que j'admire le plus, et je serois doublement heureuse d'être tirée de cette perplexité, et de leur en avoir l'obligation. Je serai peut-être à Londres incessamment. Je désirerois vivement les y trouver; mais en attendant je souhaite avec ardeur avoir ici le plus promptement possible l'homme de loi, ou seulement en état de donner de bons conseils que je demande. Je renouvelle toutes mes excuses de tant d'importunités."

It was on her departure for France in the present year that the celebrated adventure, to which I have alluded, occurred, and as it is not often that the post-boys between London and Dartford are promoted into agents of mystery or romance, I shall give the entire narrative of the event in the lady's own words,—premising (what Mr. Sheridan, no doubt, discovered) that her imagination had been for some time on the watch for such incidents, as she mentions, in another place, her terrors at the idea of "crossing the desert plains of Newmarket without an escort."

"We left London," says Madame de Genlis, "on our return to France the 20th of October, 1792, and a circumstance occurred to us so extraordinary, that I ought not, I feel, to pass it over in silence. I shall merely, however, relate the fact, without any attempt to explain it, or without adding to my recital any of those reflections which the impartial reader will easily supply. We set out at ten o'clock in the morning in two carriages, one with six horses, and the other, in which were our maids, with four. I had, two months before, sent off four of my servants to Paris, so that we had with us only one French servant, and a footman, whom we had hired to attend us as far as Dover. When we were about a quarter of a league from London, the French servant, who had never made the journey from Dover to London but once before, thought he perceived that we were not in the right road, and on his making the remark to me, I perceived it also. The postillions, on being questioned, said that they had only wished to avoid a small hill, and that they would soon return into the high road again. After an interval of three quarters of an hour, seeing that we still continued our way through a country that was entirely new to me, I again interrogated both the footman and the postillions, and they repeated their assurance that we should soon regain the usual road.

"Notwithstanding this, however, we still pursued our course with extreme rapidity, in the same unknown route; and as I had remarked that the post-boys and footman always answered me in a strange sort of laconic manner, and appeared as if they were afraid to stop, my companions and I began to look at each other with a mixture of surprise and uneasiness. We renewed our enquiries, and at last they answered that it was indeed true they had lost their way, but that they had wished to conceal it from us till they had found the cross-road to Dartford (our first stage), and that now, having been for an hour and a half in that road, we had but two miles to go before we should reach Dartford. It

appeared to us very strange that people should lose their way between London and Dover, but the assurance that we were only half a league from Dartford dispelled the sort of vague fear that had for a moment agitated us. At last, after nearly an hour had elapsed, seeing that we still were not arrived at the end of the stage, our uneasiness increased to a degree which amounted even to terror. It was with much difficulty that I made the post-boys stop opposite a small village which lay to our left; in spite of my shouts they still went on, till at last the French servant (for the other did not interfere) compelled them to stop. I then sent to the village to ask how far we were from Dartford, and my surprise may be guessed when I received for answer that we were now 22 miles (more than seven leagues) distant from that place. Concealing my suspicions, I took a guide in the village, and declared that it was my wish to return to London, as I found I was now at a less distance from that city than from Dartford. The post-boys made much resistance to my desire, and even behaved with an extreme degree of insolence, but our French servant, backed by the guide, compelled them to obey.

"As we returned at a very slow pace, owing to the sulkiness of the post-boys and the fatigue of the horses, we did not reach London before night-fall, when I immediately drove to Mr. Sheridan's house. He was extremely surprised to see me returned, and on my relating to him our adventure, agreed with us that it could not have been the result of mere chance. He then sent for a Justice of the Peace to examine the post-boys, who were detained till his arrival under the pretence of calculating their account;—but, in the meantime, the hired footman disappeared and never returned. The post-boys being examined by the Justice according to the legal form, and in the presence of witnesses, gave their answers in a very confused way, but confessed that an unknown gentleman had come in the morning to their master's, and carrying them from thence to a public-house, had, by giving them something to drink, persuaded them to take the road by which we had gone. The examination was continued for a long time, but no further confession could be drawn from them. Mr. Sheridan told me, that there was sufficient proof on which to ground an action against these men, but that it would be a tedious process, and cost a great deal of money. The post-boys were therefore dismissed, and we did not pursue the enquiry any farther. As Mr. Sheridan saw the terror I was in at the very idea of again venturing on the road to Dover, he promised to accompany us thither himself, but added that, having some indispensable business on his hands, he could not go for some days. He took us then to Isleworth, a country-house which he had near Richmond, on the banks of the Thames, and as he was not able to dispatch his business so quickly as he expected, we remained for a month in that hospitable retreat, which both gratitude and friendship rendered so agreeable to us."

It is impossible to read this narrative, with the recollection, at the same time, in our minds of the boyish propensity of Sheridan to what are called practical jokes, without strongly suspecting that he was himself the contriver of the whole adventure. The ready attendance of the Justice,—the "unknown gentleman" deposed to

by the post-boys, — the disappearance of the laquais, and the advice given by Sheridan that the affair should be pursued no further, —all strongly savour of dramatic contrivance, and must have afforded a scene not a little trying to the gravity of him who took the trouble of getting it up. With respect to his motive, the agreeable month at his country-house sufficiently explains it; nor could his conscience have felt much scruple about an imposture, which, so far from being attended with any disagreeable consequences, furnished the lady with an incident of romance, of which she was but too happy to avail herself, and procured for him the presence of such a distinguished party, to grace and enliven the festivities of Isleworth [1].

At the end of the month (adds Madame de Genlis),

"Mr. Sheridan having finished, we set off together for Dover, himself, his son, and an English friend of his, Mr. Reid, with whom I was but a few days acquainted. It was now near the end of the month of November, 1792. The wind being adverse, detained us for five days at Dover, during all which time Mr. Sheridan remained with us. At last the wind grew less unfavourable, but still blew so violently that nobody would advise me to embark. I resolved, however, to venture, and Mr. Sheridan attended us into the very packet-boat, where I received his farewell with a feeling of sadness which I cannot express. He would have crossed with us but that some indispensable duty, at that moment, required his presence in England. He, however, left us Mr. Reid, who had the goodness to accompany us to Paris."

In 1793 war was declared between England and France. Though hostilities might, for a short time longer, have been avoided, by a more accommodating readiness in listening to the overtures of France, and a less stately tone on the part of the English negotiator, there could hardly have existed in dispassionate minds any hope of averting the war entirely, or even of postponing it for any considerable period. Indeed, however rational at first might have been the expectation, that France, if left to pass through the ferment of her own Revolution, would have either settled at last into a less dangerous form of power, or exhausted herself into a state of harmless-

[1] In the Memoirs of Madame de Genlis, lately published, she supplies a still more interesting key to his motives for such a contrivance. It appears, from the new recollections of this lady, that "he was passionately in love with Pamela," and that, before her departure from England, the following scene took place :— "Two days before we set out, Mr. Sheridan made, in my presence, his declaration of love to Pamela, who was affected by his agreeable manner and high character, and accepted the offer of his hand with pleasure. In consequence of this, it was settled that he was to marry her on our return from France, which was expected to take place in a fortnight." I suspect this to be but a continuation of the Romance of Dartford.

ness during the process, this hope had been for some time frustrated by the crusade proclaimed against her liberties by the confederated Princes of Europe. The conference at Pilnitz and the Manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick had taught the French people what they were to expect, if conquered, and had given to that inundation of energy, under which the Republic herself was sinking, a vent and direction outwards that transferred all the ruin to her enemies. In the wild career of aggression and lawlessness, of conquest without and anarchy within, which naturally followed such an outbreak of a whole maddened people, it would have been difficult for England, by any management whatever, to keep herself uninvolved in the general combustion.—even had her own population been much less heartily disposed than they were then, and ever have been, to strike in with the great discords of the world.

That Mr. Pitt himself was slow and reluctant to yield to the necessity of hostile measures against France, appears from the whole course of his financial policy, down to the very close of the session of 1792. The confidence, indeed, with which he looked forward to a long continuance of peace, in the midst of events that were audibly the first mutterings of the earthquake, seemed but little indicative of that philosophic sagacity, which enables a statesman to see the rudiments of the Future in the Present [1]. "It is not unreasonable," said he on the 21st of February, 1792, "to expect that the peace which we now enjoy should continue at least fifteen years, since at no period of the British history, whether we consider the internal situation of this kingdom or its relation to foreign powers, has the prospect of war been farther removed than at present."

In pursuance of this feeling of security, he, in the course of the session of 1791-2, repealed taxes to the amount of 200,000*l.* a-year made considerable reductions in the naval and military establishments, and allowed the Hessian Subsidy to expire, without any movement towards its renewal. He likewise showed his perfect confidence in the tranquillity of the country, by breaking off a negotiation into which he had entered with the holders of the four per cents., for the reduction of their stock to three per cent.,—

[1] From the following words in his Speech on the communication from France in 1800, he appears, himself, to have been aware of his want of foresight at the commencement of the war:—

"Besides this, the reduction of our Peace Establishment in the year 1791, and continued to the subsequent year, is a fact, from which the inference is indisputable; a fact, which, I am afraid, shows not only that we were not waiting for the occasion of war, but that, in our partiality for a pacific system, we had indulged ourselves in a fond and credulous security, which wisdom and discretion would not have dictated."

saying, in answer to their demand of a larger bonus than he thought proper to give, "Then we will put off the reduction of this stock till next year." The truth is, Mr. Pitt was proud of his financial system;—the abolition of taxes and the Reduction of the National Debt were the two great results to which he looked as a proof of its perfection; and while a war, he knew, would produce the very reverse of the one, it would leave little more than the name and semblance of the other.

The alarm for the safety of their establishments, which at this time pervaded the great mass of the people of England, carried the proof of its own needlessness in the wide extent to which it spread, and the very small minority that was thereby left to be the object of apprehension. That in this minority, (which was, with few exceptions, confined to the lower classes, the elements of sedition and insurrection were actively at work, cannot be denied. There was not a corner of Europe where the same ingredients were not brought into ferment; for the French Revolution had not only the violence, but the pervading influence of the Simoom, and while it destroyed where it immediately passed, made itself felt every where. But surrounded and watched as were the few disaffected in England, by all the rank, property and power of the country, —animated at that moment by a more than usual portion of loyalty,—the dangers from sedition, as yet, were by no means either so deep or extensive, as that a strict and vigilant exercise of the laws already in being would not have been abundantly adequate to all the purposes of their suppression.

The admiration, indeed, with which the first dawn of the Revolution was hailed had considerably abated. The excesses into which the new Republic broke loose had alienated the worship of most of its higher class of votaries, and in some, as in Mr. Windham, had converted enthusiastic admiration into horror;—so that, though a strong sympathy with the general cause of the Revolution was still felt among the few Whigs that remained, the profession of its wild, republican theories was chiefly confined to two classes of persons, who coincide more frequently than they themselves imagine,—the speculative and the ignorant.

The Minister, however, gave way to a panic which, there is every reason to believe, he did not himself participate, and in going out of the precincts of the Constitution for new and arbitrary powers, established a series of fatal precedents, of which alarmed Authority will be always but too ready to avail itself. By these stretches of power he produced—what was far more dangerous than all the raving of club politicians—that vehement reaction of feeling on the part of Mr. Fox and his followers, which increased with the

increasing rigour of the government, and sometimes led them to the brink of such modes and principles of opposition, as aggressions so wanton upon liberty alone could have either provoked or justified.

The great promoters of the alarm were Mr. Burke, and those other Whig Seceders, who had for some time taken part with the administration against their former friends, and, as is usual with such proselytes, outran those whom they joined, on every point upon which they before most differed from them. To justify their defection, the dangers upon which they grounded it, were exaggerated; and the eagerness with which they called for restrictions upon the liberty of the subject was but too worthy of deserters not only from their post but from their principles. One striking difference between these new pupils of Toryism and their master was with respect to the ultimate object of the war,—Mr. Pitt being of opinion that security against the power of France, without any interference whatever with her internal affairs, was the sole aim to which hostilities should be directed; while nothing less than the restoration of the Bourbons to the power which they possessed before the assembling of the États Généraux could satisfy Mr. Burke and his fellow converts to the cause of Thrones and Hierarchies. The effect of this diversity of objects upon the conduct of the war—particularly after Mr. Pitt had added to "Security for the future," the suspicious supplement of "Indemnity for the past"—was no less fatal to the success of operations abroad than to the unity of councils at home. So separate, indeed, were the views of the two parties considered, that the unfortunate expedition, in aid of the Vendean insurgents in 1795, was known to be peculiarly the measure of the *Burke* part of the cabinet, and to have been undertaken on the sole responsibility of their ministerial organ, Mr. Windham.

It must be owned, too, that the object of the Alarmists in the war however grossly inconsistent with their former principles, had the merit of being far more definite than that of Mr. Pitt; and, had it been singly and consistently pursued from the first, with all the vigour and concentration of means so strenuously recommended by Mr. Burke, might have justified its quixotism in the end by a more speedy and less ruinous success. As it was, however, the divisions, jealousies and alarms which Mr. Pitt's views towards a future dismemberment of France excited not only among the Continental powers, but among the French themselves, completely defeated every hope and plan for either concert without, or cooperation within. At the same time, the distraction of the efforts of England from the heart of French power to its remote extremities, in what Mr. Windham called "a war upon sugar-islands."

was a waste of means as unstatesman-like as it was calamitous, and fully entitled Mr. Pitt to the satire on his policy conveyed in the remark of a certain distinguished lady, who said to him, upon hearing of some new acquisition in the West Indies, "I protest, Mr. Pitt, if you go on thus, you will soon be master of every island in the world, except just those two little ones, England and Ireland[1]."

That such was the light in which Mr. Sheridan himself viewed the mode of carrying on the war recommended by the Alarmists, in comparison with that which Mr. Pitt in general adopted, appears from the following passage in his speech upon Spanish affairs in the year 1808 :—

"There was hardly a person, except his Right Honourable Friend near him (Mr. Windham) and Mr. Burke, who since the Revolution of France had formed adequate notions of the necessary steps to be taken. The various governments which this country had seen during that period were always employed in filching for a sugar-island, or some other object of comparatively trifling moment, while the main and principal purpose was lost and forgotten."

Whatever were the failures of Mr. Pitt abroad, at home his ascendancy was fixed and indisputable; and, among all the triumphs of power which he enjoyed during his career, the tribute now paid to him by the Whig Aristocracy, in taking shelter under his ministry from the dangers of Revolution, could not have been the least gratifying to his haughty spirit. The India Bill had ranged on his side the King and the People, and the Revolution now brought to his banner the flower of the Nobility of both parties. His own estimate of rank may be fairly collected both from the indifference which he showed to its honours himself, and from the depreciating profusion with which he lavished them upon others. It may be doubted whether his respect for Aristocracy was much increased, by the readiness which he now saw in some of his high-born opponents to volunteer for safety into his already powerful ranks, without even pausing to try the experiment, whether safety might not have been reconcileable with principle in their own. It is certain that, without the accession of so much weight and influence, he never could have ventured upon the violations of the Constitution that followed—nor would the Opposition, accordingly, have been driven by these excesses of power into that reactive violence which was the natural consequence of an effort to resist them. The prudent apprehensions, therefore, of these Noble Whigs would have been much more usefully as well as honourably employed, in mingling with, and moderating the

[1] Mr. Sheridan quoted this anecdote in one of his speeches in 1794.

proceedings of the friends of Liberty, than in ministering fresh fuel to the zeal and vindictiveness of her enemies [1].

It may be added, too, that in allowing themselves to be persuaded by Burke, that the extinction of the antient *Noblesse* of France portended necessarily any danger to the English Aristocracy, these Noble persons did injustice to the strength of their own order, and to the characteristics by which it is proudly distinguished from every other race of Nobility in Europe. Placed, as a sort of breakwater between the People and the Throne, in a state of double responsibility to liberty on one side, and authority on the other, the Aristocracy of England hold a station which is dignified by its own great duties and of which the titles transmitted by their ancestors form the least important ornament. Unlike the Nobility of other countries, where the rank and privileges of the father are multiplied through his offspring, and equally elevate them all above the level of the community, the very highest English Nobleman must consent to be the father but of commoners. Thus, connected with the class below him by private as well as public sympathies, he gives his children to the People as hostages for the sincerity of his zeal in their cause—while on the other hand, the People, in return for these pledges of the Aristocracy, sends a portion of its own elements aloft into that higher region, to mingle with its glories and assert their claim to share in its power. By this mutual transfusion an equilibrium is preserved, like that which similar processes maintain in the natural world; and while a healthy, popular feeling circulates through the Aristocracy, a sense of their own station in the scale elevates the People.

To tremble for the safety of a Nobility so constituted, without much stronger grounds for alarm than appear to have existed in 1793, was an injustice not only to that class itself, but the whole nation. The world has never yet afforded an example, where this artificial distinction between mankind has been turned to such beneficial account; and as no monarchy can exist without such an order, so, in any other shape than this, such an order is a burden and a

[1] The case against these Noble Seceders is thus spiritedly stated by Lord Moira:—

"I cannot ever sit in a cabinet with the Duke of Portland. He appears to me to have done more injury to the Constitution, and to the estimation of the higher ranks in this country, than any man on the political stage. By his union with Mr. Pitt, he has given it to be understood by the people, that either all the constitutional charges which he and his friends for so many years urged against Mr. Pitt were groundless, or that, being solid, there was no difficulty in waiving them when a convenient partition of powers and emoluments was proposed. In either case the people must infer that the constitutional principle which can be so played with is unimportant, and that parliamentary professions are no security." *Letter from the Earl of Moira to Colonel M'Mahon, in* 1797. *Parliamentary History.*

nuisance. In England, so happy a conformation of her Aristocracy is one of those fortuitous results which time and circumstances have brought out in the long tried experiment of her Constitution; and, while there is no chance of its being ever again attained in the old World, there is but little probability of its being attempted in the New, —where the youthful nations now springing into life, will, if they are wise, make the most of the free career before them, and unencumbered with the costly trappings of feudalism, adopt, like their northern neighbours, that form of government, whose simplicity and cheapness are the best guarantees for its efficacy and purity.

In judging of the policy of Mr. Pitt, during the Revolutionary war, his partizans, we know, laud it as having been the means of salvation to England, while his opponents assert that it was only prevented by chance from being her ruin—and though the event[1] gives an appearance of triumph to the former opinion, it by no means removes or even weakens the grounds of the latter. During the first nine years of his administration, Mr. Pitt was, in every respect, an able and most useful minister, and, "while the sea was calm, showed mastership in floating." But the great events that happened afterwards took him by surprise. When he came to look abroad from his cabinet into the storm that was brewing through Europe, the clear and enlarged view of the higher order of statesman was wanting. Instead of elevating himself above the influence of the agitation and alarm that prevailed, he gave way to it with the crowd of ordinary minds, and even took counsel from the panic of others. The consequence was a series of measures, violent at home and inefficient abroad—far short of the mark where vigour was wanting, and beyond it, as often, where vigour was mischievous.

When we are told to regard his policy as the salvation of the country—when (to use a figure of Mr. Dundas) a *claim of salvage* is made for him,—it may be allowed us to consider a little the nature of the measures, by which this alleged salvation was achieved. If entering into a great war without either consistency of plan, or preparation of means, and with a total ignorance of the financial resources of the enemy[1]—if allowing one part of the Cabinet to flatter the French Royalists, with the hope of seeing the Bourbons restored to undiminished power, while the other part acted whenever an opportunity offered, upon the plan of dismembering France for the aggrandizement of Austria, and thus, at once, alienated Prussia at the very moment of subsidizing him, and lost the confidence of all the Royalist party in France[2], except the few who were ruined by

[1] Into his erroneous calculations upon this point he is supposed to have been led by Sir Francis D'Ivernois.

[2] Among other instances, the Abbé Maury is reported to have said at Rome,

English assistance at Quiberon—if going to war in 1793 for the right of the Dutch to a river, and so managing it that in 1794 the Dutch lost their whole Seven Provinces—if lavishing more money upon failures than the successes of a century had cost, and supporting this profusion by schemes of finance, either hollow and delusive, like the Sinking Fund, or desperately regardless of the future, like the paper issues—if driving Ireland into rebellion by the perfidious recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, and reducing England to two of the most fearful trials that a nation, depending upon Credit and a navy, could encounter, the stoppage of her Bank and a mutiny in her fleet—if, finally, floundering on from effort to effort against France, and then dying upon the ruins of the last Coalition he could muster against her—if all this betokens a wise and able minister, then is Mr. Pitt most amply entitled to that name;—then are the lessons of wisdom to be read, like Hebrew, backward, and waste and rashness and systematic failure to be held the only true means of saving a country.

Had even success, by one of those anomalous accidents, which sometimes baffle the best founded calculations of wisdom, been the immediate result of this long monotony of error, it could not, except with those to whom the event is every thing—"*Eventus, stultorum magister*[1]"—reflect back merit upon the means by which it was achieved, or, by a retrospective miracle, convert that into wisdom, which chance had only saved from the worst consequences of folly. Just as well might we be called upon to pronounce Alchemy a wise art, because a perseverance in its failures and reveries had led by accident to the discoveries of Chemistry. But even this sanction of good-luck was wanting to the unredeemed mistakes of Mr. Pitt. During the eight years that intervened between his death and the termination of the contest, the adoption of a far wiser policy was forced upon his more tractable pupils; and the only share that his measures can claim in the successful issue of the war, is that of having produced the grievance that was then abated—of having raised up the power opposed to him to the portentous and dizzy height from which it then fell by the giddiness of its own elevation[2], and by the reaction, not of the Princes, but the People of Europe against its yoke.

What would have been the course of affairs, both foreign and domestic, had Mr. Fox—as was, at one time, not improbable

in a large company of his countrymen—"Still we have one remedy—let us not allow France to be divided—we have seen the partition of Poland: we must all turn Jacobins to preserve our country."

[1] A saying of the wise Fabius.

[2] —— "*summisque negatum*
Stare diu."—LUCAN.

—been the Minister during this period, must be left to that superhuman knowledge, which the schoolmen call "*Media scientia*," and which consists in knowing all that would have happened, had events been otherwise than they have been. It is probable that some of the results would not have been so different as the respective principles of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox might naturally lead us, on the first thought, to assert. If left to himself, there is little doubt that the latter, from the simple and fearless magnanimity of his nature, would have consulted for the public safety, with that moderation which true courage inspires; and that, even had it been necessary to suspend the Constitution for a season, he would have known how to veil the statue of Liberty[1], without leaving, like his rival, such marks of mutilation on its limbs. But it is to be recollected that he would have had to encounter, in his own ranks, the very same patrician alarm, which could even to Mr. Pitt give an increase of momentum against liberty, and which the possession of power would have rendered but more sensitive and arbitrary. Accustomed, too, as he had long been, to yield to the influence of Burke, it would have required more firmness than habitually belonged to Mr. Fox, to withstand the persevering impetuosity of such a counsellor, or keep the balance of his mind unshaken by those stupendous powers, which, like the horses of the Sun breaking out of the ecliptic, carried every thing they seized upon so splendidly astray :—

> "*quaque impetus egit,*
> *Hac sine lege ruunt, altoque sub æthere fixis*
> *Incursant stellis, rapiuntque per avia currum.*
>
> Where'er the impulse drives, they burst away,
> In lawless grandeur;—break into the array
> Of the fix'd stars, and bound and blaze along
> Their devious course, magnificently wrong!

Having hazarded these general observations, upon the views and conduct of the respective parties of England, during the Crusade now begun against the French people, I shall content myself with briefly and cursorily noticing the chief questions upon which Mr. Sheridan distinguished himself, in the course of the parliamentary campaigns that followed. The sort of *guerilla* warfare, which he and the rest of the small band attached to Mr. Fox carried on, during this period, against the invaders of the Constitution, is interesting rather by its general character than its detail; for in these, as usual, the episodes of party personality are found to encroach disproportionately on the main design, and the grandeur of the cause, as

[1] "*Il y a des cas où il faut mettre pour un moment un voile sur la Liberté, comme l'on cache les statues des dieux.*"—MONTESQUIEU, liv. xii. chap. 20.

viewed at a distance, becomes diminished to our imaginations by too near an approach. Englishmen, however, will long look back to that crisis with interest; and the names of Fox, of Sheridan, and of Grey, will be affectionately remembered, when that sort of false elevation, which party-feeling now gives to the reputations of some who were opposed to them, shall have subsided to its due level, or been succeeded by oblivion. They who act against the general sympathies of mankind, however they may be artificially buoyed up for the moment, have the current against them in the long run of fame; while the reputation of those, whose talents have been employed upon the popular and generous side of human feelings, receives, through all time, an accelerating impulse from the countless hearts that go with it in its course. Lord Chatham even now supersedes his son in fame, and will leave him at an immeasurable distance with posterity.

Of the events of the private life of Mr. Sheridan, during this stormy part of his political career, there remain but few memorials among his papers. As an illustration, however, of his love of betting—the only sort of Gambling in which he ever indulged—the following curious list of his wagers for the year is not unamusing:—

"25th *May*, 1795.—Mr. Sheridan bets Gen. Fitzpatrick one hundred guineas to fifty guineas, that within two years from this date some measure is adopted in Parliament which shall be (*bonâ fide*) considered as the adoption of a Parliamentary Reform.

"29th *January*, 1795.—Mr. S. bets Mr. Boothby Clopton five hundred guineas, that there is a Reform in the Representation of the people of England within three years from the date hereof.

"29th *January*, 1795.—Mr. S. bets Mr. Hardy one hundred guineas to fifty guineas, that Mr. W. Windham does not represent Norwich at the next general election.

"29th *January*, 1795.—Mr. S. bets Gen. Fitzpatrick fifty guineas, that a corps of British troops are sent to Holland within two months of the date hereof.

"18th *March*, 1795.—Mr. S. bets Lord Titchfield two hundred guineas, that the D. of Portland is at the head of an Administration on or before the 18th of March, 1796: Mr. Fox to decide whether any place the Duke may then fill shall *bonâ fide* come within the meaning of this bet.

"25th *March*, 1793.—Mr. S. bets Mr. Hardy one hundred guineas, that the three per cent. consols are as high this day twelvemonth as at the date hereof.

"Mr. S. bets Gen. Tarleton one hundred guineas to fifty guineas, that Mr. Pitt is first Lord of the Treasury on the 28th of May, 1795.—Mr. S. bets Mr. St. A. St. John fifteen guineas to five guineas, ditto.—Mr. S. bets Lord Sefton one hundred and forty guineas to forty guineas to ditto.

"19th *March*, 1793 —Lord Titchfield and Lord W. Russell bet Mr. S. three hundred guineas to two hundred guineas that Mr. Pitt is first Lord of the Treasury on the 19th of March, 1795.

"18th *March*, 1793.—Lord Titchfield bets Mr. S. twenty-five guineas to fifty guineas, that Mr. Windham represents Norwich at the next general election.

As a sort of moral supplement to this strange list, and one of those insights into character and conduct which it is the duty of a biographer to give, I shall subjoin a letter, connected evidently with one of the above speculations:—

"Sir,

"I am very sorry that I have been so circumstanced as to have been obliged to disappoint you respecting the payment of the five hundred guineas: when I gave the draughts on Lord * * I had every reason to be assured he would accept them, as * * had also. I enclose you, as you will see by his desire, the letter in which he excuses his not being able to pay me this part of a larger sum he owes me, and I cannot refuse him any time he requires, however inconvenient to me. I also enclose you two draughts accepted by a gentleman from whom the money will be due to me, and on whose punctuality I can rely. I extremely regret that I cannot at this juncture command the money.

"At the same time that I regret your being put to any inconvenience by this delay, I cannot help adverting to the circumstance which perhaps misled me into the expectation that you would not unwillingly allow me any reasonable time I might want for the payment of this bet. The circumstance I mean, however discreditable the plea, is the total inebriety of some of the party, particularly of myself, when I made this preposterous bet. I doubt not you will remember having yourself observed on this circumstance to a common friend the next day, with an intimation that you should not object to being off; and for my part, when I was informed that I had made such a bet and for such a sum,—the first, such folly on the face of it on my part, and the latter so out of my practice,—I certainly should have proposed the cancelling it, but that, from the intimation imparted to me, I hoped the proposition might come from you.

"I hope I need not for a moment beg you not to imagine that I am now alluding to these circumstances as the slightest invalidation of your due. So much the contrary, that I most perfectly admit that from your not having heard any thing further from me on the subject, and especially after I might have heard that if I desired it the bet might be off, you had every reason to conclude that I was satisfied with the wager, and whether made in wine or not, was desirous of abiding by it. And this was further confirmed by my receiving soon after from you 100*l.* on another bet won by me.

"Having, I think, put this point very fairly, I again repeat that my only motive for alluding to the matter was, as some explanation of my seeming dilatoriness, which certainly did in part arise from always conceiving that, whenever I should state what was my real wish the day after the bet was made, you would be the more disposed to allow a little time;—the same statement admitting, as it must, the bet to be as clearly and as fairly won as possible; in short, as if I had insisted on it myself the next morning.

"I have said more perhaps on the subject than can be necessary; but I should regret to appear negligent to an application for a just claim.

"I have the honour to be,

"Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"*Hertford St. Feb.* 26. "R. B. SHERIDAN."

Of the public transactions of Sheridan at this time, his speeches are the best record. To them, therefore, I shall henceforward principally refer my readers,—premising, that though the reports of his later speeches are somewhat better, in general, than those of his earlier displays, they still do great injustice to his powers, and exhibit little more than the mere *Torso* of his eloquence, curtailed of all those accessories that lent motion and beauty to its form. The attempts to give the terseness of his wit particularly fail, and are a strong illustration of what he himself once said to Lord * *. That Nobleman, who among his many excellent qualities does not include a very lively sense of humour, having exclaimed, upon hearing some good anecdote from Sheridan, "I'll go and tell that to our friend * *," Sheridan called him back instantly and said, with much gravity, "For God's sake, don't, my dear * *: a joke is no laughing matter in your mouth."

It is indeed singular, that all the eminent English orators—with the exception of Mr. Burke and Mr. Windham—should have been so little anxious for the correct transmission of their eloquence to posterity. Had not Cicero taken more care of even his extemporaneous effusions, we should have lost that masterly burst of the moment, to which the clemency of Cæsar towards Marcellus gave birth. The beautiful fragments we have of Lord Chatham are rather traditional

than recorded;—there are but two, I believe, of the speeches of Mr. Pitt corrected by himself, those on the Budget of 1792, and on the Union with Ireland;—Mr. Fox committed to writing but one of his, namely, the tribute to the memory of the Duke of Bedford;—and the only speech of Mr. Sheridan, that is known with certainty to have passed under his own revision, was that which he made at the opening of the following session (1794), in answer to Lord Mornington.

In the course of the present year he took frequent opportunities of expressing his disgust at that spirit of ferocity, which had so deeply disgraced the cause of the Revolution. So earnest was his interest in the fate of the Royal Family of France, that, as appears from one of his speeches, he drew up a paper on the subject, and transmitted it to the republican rulers;—with the view, no doubt, of conveying to them the feelings of the English Opposition, and endeavouring to avert, by the influence of his own name and that of Mr. Fox, the catastrophe that awaited those Royal victims of liberty. Of this interesting document I cannot discover any traces.

In one of his answers to Burke on the subject of the French Revolution, adverting to the charge of Deism and Atheism brought against the republicans, he says,

"As an argument to the feelings and passions of men, the Honourable Member had great advantages in dwelling on this topic; because it was a subject which those who disliked every thing that had the air of cant and profession on the one hand, or of indifference on the other, found it awkward to meddle with. Establishments, tests, and matters of that nature, were proper objects of political discussion in that House, but not general charges of Atheism and Deism, as pressed upon their consideration by the Honourable Gentleman. Thus far, however he would say, and it was an opinion he had never changed or concealed, that, although no man can command his conviction, he had ever considered a deliberate disposition to make proselytes in infidelity as an unaccountable depravity. Whoever attempted to pluck the belief or the prejudice on this subject, style it which he would, from the bosom of one man, woman, or child, committed a brutal outrage, the motive for which he had never been able to trace or conceive."

I quote these words as creditable to the feeling and good sense of Sheridan. Whatever may be thought of particular faiths and sects, a belief in a life beyond this world is the only thing that pierces through the walls of our prison-house, and lets hope shine in upon a scene that would be otherwise bewildered and desolate. The proselytism of the Atheist is, indeed, a dismal mission. That believers, who have each the same heaven in prospect, should invite us to join them on their respective ways to it, is at least a benevolent of-

ficiousness; — but that he, who has no prospect or hope himself, should seek for companionship in his road to annihilation, can only be explained by that tendency in human creatures to count upon each other in their despair, as well as their hope.

In the speech upon his own Motion relative to the existence of seditious practices in the country, there is some lively ridicule upon the panic then prevalent. For instance :—

"The alarm had been brought forward in great pomp and form on Saturday morning. At night all the mail-coaches were stopped; the Duke of Richmond stationed himself, among other curiosities, at the Tower; a great municipal officer, too, had made a discovery exceedingly beneficial to the people of this country. He meant the Lord Mayor of London, who had found out that there was at the King's Arms in Cornhill a Debating Society, where principles of the most dangerous tendency were propagated; where people went to buy treason at sixpence a-head; where it was retailed to them by the glimmering of an inch of candle; and five minutes, to be measured by the glass, were allowed to each traitor to perform his part in overturning the State."

It was in the same speech that he gave the well-known and happy turn to the motto of the Sun newspaper, which was at that time known to be the organ of the Alarmists. "There was one paper," he remarked, "in particular, said to be the property of members of that House, and published and conducted under their immediate direction, which had for its motto a garbled part of a beautiful sentence, when it might, with much more propriety, have assumed the whole—

"'*Solem quis dicere falsum*
Audeat? Ille etiam cæcos instare tumultus
Sæpe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella.'"

Among the subjects that occupied the greatest share of his attention, during this Session, was the Memorial of Lord Auckland to the States-General,—which document he himself brought under the notice of Parliament, as deserving of severe reprobation for the violent and vindictive tone which it assumed towards the Commissioners of the National Convention. It was upon one of the discussions connected with this subject that a dispute, as to the correct translation of the word "*malheureux*," was maintained with much earnestness between him and Lord Melville—two persons, the least qualified, perhaps, of any in the House, to volunteer as either interpreters or pronouncers of the French language. According to Sheridan, "*ces malheureux*" was to be translated "these wretches;" while Lord Melville contended, to the no small amusement of the House, that "*mollyroo*" (as he pronounced it) meant no more than "these unfortunate gentlemen."

In the November of this year Mr. Sheridan lost, by a kind of death which must have deepened the feeling of the loss, the most intimate of all his companions, Tickell. If congeniality of dispositions and pursuits were always a strengthener of affection, the friendship between Tickell and Sheridan ought to have been of the most cordial kind; for they resembled each other in almost every particular—in their wit, their wants, their talent, and their thoughtlessness. It is but too true, however, that friendship in general gains far less by such a community of pursuit than it loses by the competition that naturally springs out of it; and that two wits or two beauties form the last sort of alliance in which we ought to look for specimens of sincere and cordial friendship. The intercourse between Tickell and Sheridan was not free from such collisions of vanity. They seem to have lived, indeed, in a state of alternate repulsion and attraction; and, unable to do without the excitement of each other's vivacity, seldom parted without trials of temper as well as of wit. Being both, too, observers of character, and each finding in the other rich materials for observation, their love of ridicule could not withstand such a temptation, and they freely criticised each other to common friends, who, as is usually the case, agreed with both. Still, however, there was a whim and sprightliness, even about their mischief, which made it seem rather an exercise of ingenuity than an indulgence of ill nature; and if they had not carried on this intellectual warfare, neither would have liked the other half so well.

The two principal productions of Tickell, the "Wreath of Fashion" and "Anticipation," were both upon temporary subjects, and have accordingly passed into oblivion. There are, however, some graceful touches of pleasantry in the poem; and the pamphlet (which procured for him not only fame but a place in the Stamp-office) contains passages, of which the application and the humour have not yet grown stale. As Sheridan is the hero of the Wreath of Fashion, it is but right to quote the verses that relate to him: and I do it with the more pleasure, because they also contain a well-merited tribute to Mrs. Sheridan. After a description of the various poets of the day that deposit their offerings in Lady Millar's "Vase of Sentiment," the author thus proceeds:—

> "At Fashion's shrine behold a gentler bard
> Gaze on the mystic vase with fond regard—
> But see, Thalia checks the doubtful thought,
> 'Canst thou (she cries) with sense, with genius fraught,
> Canst thou to Fashion's tyranny submit,
> Secure in native, independent wit?
> Or yield to Sentiment's insipid rule,
> By Taste, by Fancy, chac'd through Scandal's school?

Ah no—be Sheridan's the comic page,
Or let me fly with Garrick from the stage.'
Haste then, my friend, (for let me boast that name,)
Haste to the opening path of genuine fame,
Or, if thy muse a gentler theme pursue,
Ah, 'tis to love and thy Eliza due!
For, sure, the sweetest lay she well may claim,
Whose soul breathes harmony o'er all her frame;
While wedded love, with ray serenely clear,
Beams from her eye, as from its proper sphere."

In the year 1781, Tickell brought out at Drury-Lane an opera called "The Carnival of Venice," on which there is the following remark in Mrs. Crouch's Memoirs:—"Many songs in this piece so perfectly resemble in poetic beauty those which adorn The Duenna, that they declare themselves to be the offspring of the same muse." I know not how far this conjecture may be founded; but there are four pretty lines which I remember in this opera, and which, it may be asserted without hesitation, Sheridan never wrote. He had no feeling for natural scenery [1], nor is there a trace of such a sentiment discoverable through his poetry. The following, as well as I can recollect, are the lines:—

"And while the moon shines on the stream,
And as soft music breathes around,
The feathering oar returns the gleam,
And dips in concert to the sound."

I have already given a humorous Dedication of the Rivals, written by Tickell on the margin of a copy of that play in my possession. I shall now add another piece of still more happy humour, with which he has filled, in very neat handwriting, the three or four first pages of the same copy.

"The Rivals, a Comedy—one of the best in the English language—written as long ago as the reign of George the Third. The author's name was Sheridan—he is mentioned by the historians of that age as a man of uncommon abilities, very little improved by cultivation. His confidence in the resources of his own genius, and his aversion to any sort of labour, were so great that he could not be prevailed upon to learn either to read or write. He was, for a short time, Manager of one of the

[1] In corroboration of this remark, I have been allowed to quote the following passage of a letter written by a very eminent person, whose name all lovers of the Picturesque associate with their best enjoyment of its beauties:—

"At one time I saw a good deal of Sheridan—he and his first wife passed some time here, and he is an instance that a taste for poetry and for scenery are not always united. Had this house been in the midst of Hounslow Heath, he could not have taken less interest in all around it: his delight was in shooting, all and every day; and my gamekeeper said, that of all the gentlemen he had ever been out with, he never knew so bad a shot."

play-houses, and conceived the extraordinary and almost incredible project of composing a play extempore, which he was to recite in the Green-room to the actors, who were immediately to come on the stage and perform it. The players refusing to undertake their parts at so short a notice, and with so little preparation, he threw up the management in disgust.

"He was a member of the last Parliaments that were summoned in England, and signalised himself on many occasions by his wit and eloquence, though he seldom came to the House till the debate was nearly concluded, and never spoke, unless he was drunk. He lived on a footing of great intimacy with the famous Fox, who is said to have concerted with him the audacious attempt which he made, about the year 1785, to seize the whole property of the East India Company, amounting at that time to above 12,000,000*l.* sterling, and then to declare himself Lord Protector of the realm by the title of Carlo Khan. This desperate scheme actually received the consent of the lower House of parliament, the majority of whom were bribed by Fox, or intimidated by his and Sheridan's threats and violence; and it is generally believed that the Revolution would have taken place, if the Lords of the King's Bedchamber had not in a body surrounded the throne, and shown the most determined resolution not to abandon their posts but with their lives. The usurpation being defeated, Parliament was dissolved and loaded with infamy. Sheridan was one of the few members of it who were re-elected:—the Burgesses of Stafford, whom he had kept in a constant state of intoxication for near three weeks, chose him again to represent them, which he was well qualified to do.

"Fox's Whig party being very much reduced, or rather almost annihilated, he and the rest of the conspirators remained quiet for some time; till, in the year 1788, the French, in conjunction with Tippoo Sultan, having suddenly seized and divided between themselves the whole of the British possessions in India, the East India Company broke, and a national bankruptcy was apprehended. During this confusion Fox and his partizans assembled in large bodies, and made a violent attack in Parliament on Pitt, the King's first minister:—Sheridan supported and seconded him. Parliament seemed disposed to enquire into the cause of the calamity: the nation was almost in a state of actual rebellion; and it is impossible for us, at the distance of three hundred years, to form any judgment what dreadful consequences might have followed, if the King, by the advice of the Lords of the Bedchamber, had not dissolved the Parliament, and taken the administration of affairs into his own hands, and those of a few confidential servants, at the head of whom he was pleased to place one Mr. Atkinson, a merchant, who had acquired a handsome fortune in the Jamaica trade, and passed universally for a man of unblemished integrity. His Majesty having now no farther occasion for Pitt, and being desirous of rewarding him for his past services, and, at the same time, finding an adequate employment for his great talents, caused him to enter into holy orders, and presented him with the Deanery of Windsor, where he became an excellent preacher, and published several volumes of sermons, all of which are now lost.

"To return to Sheridan:—on the abrogation of Parliaments, he

entered into a closer connection than ever with Fox and a few others of lesser note, forming together as desperate and profligate a gang as ever disgraced a civilized country. They were guilty of every species of enormity, and went so far as even to commit robberies on the highway, with a degree of audacity that could be equalled only by the ingenuity with which they escaped conviction. Sheridan, not satisfied with eluding, determined to mock the justice of his country, and composed a Masque called 'The Foresters,' containing a circumstantial account of some of the robberies he had committed, and a good deal of sarcasm on the pusillanimity of those whom he had robbed, and the inefficacy of the penal laws of the kingdom. This piece was acted at Drury-Lane Theatre with great applause, to the astonishment of all sober persons, and the scandal of the nation. His Majesty, who had long wished to curb the licentiousness of the press and the theatres, thought this a good opportunity. He ordered the performers to be enlisted into the army, the play-house to be shut up, and all Theatrical exhibitions to be forbid on pain of death. Drury-Lane house was soon after converted into a barrack for soldiers, which it has continued to be ever since. Sheridan was arrested, and, it was imagined would have suffered the rack, if he had not escaped from his guard by a stratagem, and gone over to Ireland in a balloon with which his friend Fox furnished him. Immediately on his arrival in Ireland, he put himself at the head of a party of the most violent Reformers, commanded a regiment of Volunteers at the siege of Dublin in 1791, and was supposed to be the person who planned the scheme for tarring and feathering Mr. Jenkinson, the Lord Lieutenant, and forcing him in that condition to sign the capitulation of the Castle. The persons who were to execute this strange enterprize had actually got into the Lord Lieutenant's apartment at midnight, and would probably have succeeded in their project, if Sheridan, who was intoxicated with whiskey, a strong liquor much in vogue with the Volunteers, had not attempted to force open the door of Mrs.———'s bedchamber, and so given the alarm to the garrison, who instantly flew to arms, seized Sheridan and every one of his party, and confined them in the castle-dungeon. Sheridan was ordered for execution the next day, but had no sooner got his legs and arms at liberty, than he began capering, jumping, dancing, and making all sorts of antics, to the utter amazement of the spectators. When the chaplain endeavoured, by serious advice and admonition, to bring him to a proper sense of his dreadful situation, he grinned, made faces at him, tried to tickle him, and played a thousand other pranks with such astonishing drollery, that the gravest countenances became cheerful, and the saddest hearts glad. The soldiers who attended at the gallows were so delighted with his merriment, which they deemed magnanimity, that the sheriffs began to apprehend a rescue, and ordered the hangman instantly to do his duty. He went off in a loud horse-laugh, and cast a look towards the Castle, accompanied with a gesture expressive of no great respect.

"Thus ended the life of this singular and unhappy man—a melancholy instance of the calamities that attend the misapplication of great and splendid ability. He was married to a very beautiful and amiable woman, for whom he is said to have entertained an unalterable affection.

He had one son, a boy of the most promising hopes, whom he would never suffer to be instructed in the first rudiments of literature. He amused himself, however, with teaching the boy to draw portraits with his toes, in which he soon became so astonishing a proficient that he seldom failed to take a most exact likeness of every person who sat to him.

"There are a few more plays by the same author, all of them excellent.

"For further information concerning this strange man, vide 'Macpherson's Moral History,' Art. '*Drunkenness*.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

Speeches in answer to Lord Mornington.—Coalition of the whig Seceders with Mr. Pitt. — Mr. Canning.—Evidence on the Trial of Horne Tooke.—The "Glorious First of June."—Marriage of Mr. Sheridan.—Pamphlet of Mr. Reeves.—Debts of the Prince of Wales.—Shakspeare Manuscripts.—Trial of Stone.—Mutiny at the Nore.—Secession of Mr. Fox from Parliament.

In the year 1794, the natural consequences of the policy pursued by Mr. Pitt began rapidly to unfold themselves both at home and abroad[1]. The confederated Princes of the Continent, among whom the gold of England was now the sole bond of union, had succeeded as might be expected from so noble an incentive, and, powerful only in provoking France, had by every step they took but ministered to her aggrandizement. In the mean time, the measures of the English Minister at home were directed to the two great objects of his legislation—the raising of supplies and the suppressing of sedition; or, in other words, to the double and anomalous task of making the people pay for the failures of their Royal allies, and suffer for their sympathy with the success of their republican enemies. It is the opinion of a learned Jesuit, that it was by *aqua regia* the Golden Calf of the Israelites was dissolved—and the cause of Kings was the Royal solvent, in which the wealth of Great Britain now melted irrecoverably away. While the successes, too, of the French had already lowered the tone of the Minister from projects of aggression to precautions of defence, the wounds which, in the wantonness of alarm, he had inflicted on the liberties of the country, were spreading an inflammation around them that threatened real danger. The severity of the sentences upon Muir and Palmer in Scotland, and the daring confidence with which charges of High

[1] See, for a masterly exposure of the Errors of the War, the Speech of Lord Lansdowne this year, on bringing forward his Motion for Peace.

I cannot let the name of this nobleman pass, without expressing the deep gratitude which I feel to him, not only for his own kindness to me, when introduced, as a boy, to his notice, but for the friendship of his truly Noble descendant, which I, in a great degree, owe to him, and which has long been the pride and happiness of my life.

Treason were exhibited against persons who were, at the worst, but indiscreet reformers, excited the apprehensions of even the least sensitive friends of freedom. It is, indeed, difficult to say how far the excited temper of the government, seconded by the ever ready subservience of state-lawyers and bishops, might have proceeded at this moment, had not the acquittal of Tooke and his associates, and the triumph it diffused through the country given a lesson to Power such as England is alone capable of giving, and which will long be remembered, to the honour of that great political safe-guard,—that Life preserver in stormy times,— the Trial by Jury.

At the opening of the Session, Mr. Sheridan delivered his admirable answer to Lord Mornington, the report of which, as I have already said, was corrected for publication by himself. In this fine speech, of which the greater part must have been unprepared, there is a natural earnestness of feeling and argument that is well contrasted with the able but artificial harangue that preceded it. In referring to the details which Lord Mornington had entered into of the various atrocities committed in France, he says :—

"But what was the sum of all that he had told the House? that great and dreadful enormities had been committed, at which the heart shuddered, and which not merely wounded every feeling of humanity, but disgusted and sickened the soul. All this was most true; but what did all this prove? What, but that eternal and unalterable truth which had always presented itself to his mind, in whatever way he had viewed the subject, namely, that a long established despotism so far degraded and debased human nature, as to render its subjects, on the first recovery of their rights, unfit for the exercise of them. But never had he, or would he meet but with reprobation that mode of argument which went, in fact, to establish, as an inference from this truth, that those who had been long slaves, ought therefore to remain so for ever! No; the lesson ought to be, he would again repeat, a tenfold horror of that despotic form of government, which had so profaned and changed the nature of civilised man, and a still more jealous apprehension of any system tending to withhold the rights and liberties of our fellow-creatures. Such a form of government might be considered as twice cursed; while it existed, it was solely responsible for the miseries and calamities of its subjects; and should a day of retribution come, and the tyranny be destroyed, it was equally to be charged with all the enormities which the folly or frenzy of those who overturned it should commit.

"But the madness of the French people was not confined to their proceedings within their own country; we, and all the Powers of Europe, had to dread it. True; but was not this also to be accounted for? Wild and unsettled as their state of mind was, necessarily, upon the events which had thrown such power so suddenly into their hands, the surrounding States had goaded them into a still more savage state of madness, fury, and desperation. We had unsettled their reason, and then reviled their insanity; we drove them to the extremities that

produced the evils we arraigned; we baited them like wild beasts, until at length we made them so. The conspiracy of Pilnitz, and the brutal threats of the Royal abettors of that plot against the rights of nations and of men, had, in truth, to answer for all the additional misery, horrors, and iniquity, which had since disgraced and incensed humanity. Such has been your conduct towards France, that you have created the passions which you persecute; you mark a nation to be cut off from the world; you covenant for their extermination; you swear to hunt them in their inmost recesses; you load them with every species of execration; and you now come forth with whining declamations on the horror of their turning upon you with the fury which you inspired."

Having alluded to an assertion of Condorcet, quoted by Lord Mornington, that "revolutions are always the work of the minority," he adds livelily:—

"If this be true, it certainly is a most ominous thing for the enemies of Reform in England; for, if it holds true, of necessity, that the minority still prevails, in national contests, it must be a consequence that the smaller the minority the more certain must be the success. In what a dreadful situation then must the Noble Lord be and all the Alarmists!—for, never surely was a minority so small, so thin in number as the present. Conscious, however, that M. Condorcet was mistaken in our object, I am glad to find that we are terrible in proportion as we are few; I rejoice that the liberality of secession which has thinned our ranks has only served to make us more formidable. The Alarmists will hear this with new apprehensions; they will no doubt return to us with a view to diminish our force, and encumber us with their alliance in order to reduce us to insignificance."

We have here another instance, in addition to the many that have been given of the beauties that sprung up under Sheridan's correcting hand. This last pointed sentence was originally thus: "And we shall swell our numbers in order to come nearer in a balance of insignificance to the numerous host of the majority."

It was at this time evident that the great Whig Seceders would soon yield to the invitations of Mr. Pitt and the vehement persuasions of Burke, and commit themselves still further with the Administration by accepting of office. Though the final arrangements to this effect were not completed till the summer, on account of the lingering reluctance of the Duke of Portland and Mr. Windham, Lord Loughborough and others of the former Opposition had already put on the official livery of the Minister. It is to be regretted that, in almost all cases of conversion to the side of power, the coincidence of some worldly advantage with the change should make it difficult to decide upon the sincerity or disinterestedness of the convert. That these Noble Whigs were sincere in their alarm there is no reason to doubt, but the lesson of loyalty they have transmitted

would have been far more edifying, had the usual corollary of honours and emoluments not followed, and had they left at least one instance of political conversion on record, where the truth was its own sole reward, and the proselyte did not subside into the placeman. Mr. Sheridan was naturally indignant at these desertions, and his bitterness overflows in many passages of the speech before us. Lord Mornington having contrasted the privations and sacrifices demanded of the French by their Minister of Finance with those required of the English nation, he says, in answer:—

"The Noble Lord need not remind us, that there is no great danger of our Chancellor of the Exchequer making any such experiment. I can more easily fancy another sort of speech for our prudent Minister. I can more easily conceive him modestly comparing himself and his own measures with the character and conduct of his rival, and saying,—'Do I demand of you, wealthy citizens, to lend your hoards to Government without interest? On the contrary, when I shall come to propose a loan, there is not a man of you to whom I shall not hold out at least a job in every part of the subscription, and an usurious profit upon every pound you devote to the necessities of your country. Do I demand of you, my fellow-placemen and brother-pensioners, that you should sacrifice any part of your stipends to the public exigency? On the contrary, am I not daily increasing your emoluments and your numbers in proportion as the country becomes unable to provide for you? Do I require of you, my latest and most zealous proselytes, of you who have come over to me for the special purpose of supporting the war—a war, on the success of which you solemnly protest, that the salvation of Britain, and of civil society itself, depend—do I require of you, that you should make a temporary sacrifice, in the cause of human nature, of the greater part of your private incomes? No, gentlemen, I scorn to take advantage of the eagerness of your zeal; and to prove that I think the sincerity of your attachment to me needs no such test, I will make your interest co-operate with your principle: I will quarter many of you on the public supply, instead of calling on you to contribute to it; and, while their whole thoughts are absorbed in patriotic apprehensions for their country, I will dexterously force upon others the favourite objects of the vanity or ambition of their lives."

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"Good God, Sir, that he should have thought it prudent to have forced this contrast upon our attention; that he should triumphantly remind us of every thing that shame should have withheld, and caution would have buried in oblivion! Will those who stood forth with a parade of disinterested patriotism, and vaunted of the *sacrifices* they had made, and the *exposed situation* they had chosen, in order the better to oppose the friend of Brissot in England—will they thank the Noble Lord for reminding us how soon these lofty professions dwindled into little jobbing pursuits for followers and dependants, as unfit to fill the offices procured for them, as the offices themselves were unfit to be created?—Will the train of newly titled alarmists, of supernumerary negotiators, of pensioned

paymasters, agents and commissaries, thank him for remarking to us how profitable their panic has been to themselves, and how expensive to their country? What a contrast, indeed, do we exhibit!—What! in such an hour as this, at a moment pregnant with the national fate, when pressing as the exigency may be, the hard task of squeezing the money from the pockets of an impoverished people, from the toil, the drudgery of the shivering poor, must make the most practised collector's heart ache while he tears it from them—can it be, that people of high rank, and professing high principles, that *they* or *their families* should seek to thrive on the spoils of misery, and fatten on the meals wrested from industrious poverty? Can it be, that this should be the case with the very persons, who state the *unprecedented peril of the country* as the *sole* cause of their being found in the ministerial ranks? The Constitution is in danger, religion is in danger, the very existence of the nation itself is endangered; all personal and party considerations ought to vanish; the war must be supported by every possible exertion, and by every possible sacrifice; the people must not murmur at their burdens; it is for their salvation,—their all is at stake. The time is come, when all honest and disinterested men should rally round the Throne as round a standard;—for what? ye honest and disinterested men, to receive, for your own private emolument, a portion of those very taxes wrung from the people, on the pretence of saving them from the poverty and distress which you say the enemy would inflict, but which you take care no enemy shall be able to aggravate. Oh! shame! shame! is this a time for selfish intrigues, and the little dirty traffic for lucre and emolument? Does it suit the honour of a gentleman to ask at such a moment? Does it become the honesty of a Minister to grant? Is it intended to confirm the pernicious doctrine, so industriously propagated by many, that all public men are impostors, and that every politician has his price? Or even where there is no principle in the bosom, why does not prudence hint to the mercenary and the vain to abstain a while at least, and wait the fitting of the times? Improvident impatience! Nay, even from those who seem to have no direct object of office or profit, what is the language which their actions speak? The Throne is in danger!—'we will support the Throne; but let us share the smiles of Royalty;'—the order of Nobility is in danger!—'I will fight for Nobility,' says the Viscount, 'but my zeal would be much greater if I were made an Earl' 'Rouse all the Marquis within me,' exclaims the Earl,' and the peerage never turned forth a more undaunted champion in its cause than I shall prove.' 'Stain my green riband blue,' cries out the illustrious Knight, 'and the fountain of honour will have a fast and faithful servant.' What are the people to think of our sincerity?—What credit are they to give to our professions?—Is this system to be persevered in? Is there nothing that whispers to that Right Honourable Gentleman that the crisis is too big, that the times are too gigantic, to be ruled by the little hackneyed and every-day means of ordinary corruption?"

The discussions, indeed, during the whole of this Session, were marked by a degree of personal acrimony, which in the present more sensitive times would hardly be borne. Mr. Pitt and Mr. She-

ridan came, most of all, into collision: and the retorts of the Minister not unfrequently proved with what weight the haughty sarcasms of Power may descend even upon the tempered buckler of Wit.

It was in this Session, and on the question of the Treaty with the King of Sardinia, that Mr. Canning made his first appearance, as an orator, in the House. He brought with him a fame, already full of promise, and has been one of the brightest ornaments of the senate and the country ever since. From the political faith in which he had been educated, under the very eyes of Mr. Sheridan, who had long been the friend of his family, and at whose house he generally passed his college-vacations, the line that he was to take in the House of Commons seemed already, according to the usual course of events, marked out for him. Mr. Sheridan had, indeed, with an eagerness which, however premature, showed the value which he and others set upon the alliance, taken occasion, in the course of a laudatory tribute to Mr. Jenkinson[1], on the success of his first effort in the House, to announce the accession which his own party was about to receive, in the talents of another gentleman, — the companion and friend of the young orator who had now distinguished himself. Whether this and other friendships, formed by Mr. Canning at the University, had any share in alienating him from a political creed, which he had hitherto, perhaps, adopted rather from habit and authority than choice—or, whether he was startled at the idea of appearing for the first time in the world, as the announced pupil and friend of a person who, both by the vehemence of his politics and the irregularities of his life, had put himself, in some degree, under the ban of public opinion—or whether, lastly, he saw the difficulties which even genius like his would experience, in rising to the full growth of its ambition, under the shadowing branches of the Whig aristocracy and that superseding influence of birth and connections, which had contributed to keep even such men as Burke and Sheridan out of the Cabinet—*which* of these motives it was that now decided the choice of the young political Hercules, between the two paths that equally wooed his footsteps, none, perhaps, but himself can fully determine. His decision, we know, was in favour of the Minister and Toryism; and, after a friendly and candid explanation to Sheridan of the reasons and feelings that urged him to this step, he entered into terms with Mr. Pitt, and was by him immediately brought into Parliament.

However dangerous it might be to exalt such an example into a precedent, it is questionable whether, in thus resolving to join

[1] Now Lord Liverpool.

the ascendant side, Mr. Canning has not conferréd a greater benefit on the country than he ever would have been able to effect in the ranks of his original friend. That party, which has now so long been the sole depositary of the power of the State, had, in addition to the original narrowness of its principles, contracted all that proud obstinacy in antiquated error, which is the invariable characteristic of such monopolies; and which however consonant with its vocation, as the chosen instrument of the Crown, should have long since *invalided* it in the service of a free and enlightened people. Some infusion of the spirit of the times into this body had become necessary, even for its own preservation,—in the same manner as the inhalement of youthful breath has been recommended, by some physicians, to the infirm and superannuated. This renovating inspiration the genius of Mr. Canning has supplied. His first political lessons were derived from sources too sacred to his young admiration to be forgotten. He has carried the spirit of these lessons with him into the councils which he joined, and by the vigour of the graft, which already, indeed, shows itself in the fruits, bids fair to change altogether the nature of Toryism.

Among the eminent persons summoned as witnesses on the Trial of Horne Tooke, which took place in the November of this year, was Mr. Sheridan; and, as his evidence contains some curious particulars, both with regard to himself and the state of political feeling in the year 1790, I shall here transcribe a part of it:—

"He (Mr. Sheridan) said he recollects a meeting to celebrate the establishment of liberty in France in the year 1790. Upon that occasion he moved a Resolution drawn up the day before by the Whig club. Mr. Horne Tooke, he says, made no objection to his motion, but proposed an amendment. Mr. Tooke stated that unqualified approbation of the French Revolution, in the terms moved, might produce an ill effect out of doors, a disposition to a revolution in this country, or, at least, be misrepresented to have that object; he adverted to the circumstance of their having all of them national cockades in their hats; he proposed to add some qualifying expression to the approbation of the French Revolution, a declaration of attachment to the principles of our own Constitution; he said Mr. Tooke spoke in a figurative manner of the former Government of France; he described it as a vessel so foul and decayed, that no repair could save it from destruction, that in contrasting our state with that, he said, thank God, the main timbers of our Constitution are sound; he had before observed, however, that some reforms might be necessary; he said that sentiment was received with great disapprobation, and with very rude interruption, insomuch that Lord Stanhope, who was in the chair, interfered; he said it had happened to him, in many public meetings, to differ with and oppose the prisoner, and that he has frequently seen him received with very considerable marks of disapprobation, but he never saw them affect him much; he

said that he himself objected to Mr. Tooke's amendment; he thinks he withdrew his amendment, and moved it as a separate motion; he said it was then carried as unanimously as his own motion had been; that original motion and separate motion are in these words:—'That this meeting does most cordially rejoice in the establishment and confirmation of liberty in France; and it beholds with peculiar satisfaction the sentiments of amity and good will which appear to pervade the people of that country towards this kingdom, especially at a time when it is the manifest interest of both states that nothing should interrupt the harmony which at present subsists between them, and which is so essentially necessary to the freedom and happiness, not only of the French nation, but of all mankind.' Mr. Tooke wished to add to his motion some qualifying clause, to guard against misunderstanding and misrepresentation:—that there was a wide difference between England and France; that in France the vessel was so foul and decayed, that no repair could save it from destruction, whereas, in England, we had a noble and stately vessel, sailing proudly on the bosom of the ocean; that her main timbers were sound, though it was true, after so long a course of years, she might want some repairs. Mr. Tooke's motion was,—'That we feel equal satisfaction that the subjects of England, by the virtuous exertions of their ancestors, have not so arduous a task to perform as the French have had, but have only to maintain and improve the Constitution which their ancestors have transmitted to them.'—This was carried unanimously."

The trial of Warren Hastings still "dragged its slow length along," and in the May of this year Mr. Sheridan was called upon for his Reply on the Begum Charge. It was usual, on these occasions, for the Manager who spoke to be assisted by one of his brother managers, whose task it was to carry the bag that contained his papers, and to read out whatever Minutes might be referred to in the course of the argument. Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor was the person who undertook this office for Sheridan; but on the morning of the speech, upon his asking for the bag that he was to carry, he was told by Sheridan that there was none—neither bag nor papers. They must manage, he said, as well as they could without them;—and when the papers were called for, his friend must only put the best countenance he could upon it. As for himself, "he would abuse Ned Law—ridicule Plumer's long orations—make the Court laugh—please the women, and, in short, with Taylor's aid, would get triumphantly through his task." His opening of the case was listened to with the profoundest attention; but when he came to contrast the evidence of the Commons with that adduced by Hastings, it was not long before the Chancellor interrupted him, with a request, that the printed Minutes to which he referred should be read. Sheridan answered that his friend Mr. Taylor would read them; and Mr. Taylor affected to send for the bag, while the orator begged leave, in the mean time, to proceed. Again, however, his state-

ments rendered a reference to the Minutes necessary', and again he was interrupted by the Chancellor, while an outcry after Mr. Sheridan's bag was raised in all directions. At first the blame was laid on the solicitor's clerk — then a messenger was dispatched to Mr. Sheridan's house. In the mean time, the orator was proceeding brilliantly and successfully in his argument; and, on some further interruption and expostulation from the Chancellor, raised his voice and said, in a dignified tone, "On the part of the Commons, and as a Manager of this Impeachment, I shall conduct my case as I think proper. I mean to be correct; and Your Lordships, having the printed Minutes before you, will afterwards see whether I amri ght or wrong."

During the bustle produced by the enquiries after the bag, Mr. Fox, alarmed at the inconvenience which, he feared, the want of it might occasion to Sheridan, ran up from the Managers' room, and demanded eagerly the cause of this mistake from Mr. Taylor; who, hiding his mouth with his hand, whispered him, (in a tone of which they alone, who have heard this gentleman relate the anecdote, can feel the full humour,) "The man has no bag!"

The whole of this characteristic contrivance was evidently intended by Sheridan to raise that sort of surprise at the readiness of his resources, which it was the favourite triumph of his vanity to create. I have it on the authority of Mr. William Smythe, that, previously to the delivery of this speech, he passed two or three days alone at Wanstead, so occupied from morning till night in writing and reading of papers, as to complain in the evenings that he "had motes before his eyes." This mixture of real labour with apparent carelessness was, indeed, one of the most curious features of his life and character.

Together with the political contests of this stormy year, he had also on his mind the cares of his new Theatre, which opened on the 21st of April, with a prologue, not by himself, as might have been expected, but by his friend General Fitzpatrick. He found time, however, to assist in the rapid manufacture of a little piece called "The glorious First of June," which was acted immediately after Lord Howe's victory, and of which I have found some sketches[1] in Sheridan's hand-writing,— though the dialogue was no doubt supplied (as Mr. Boaden says) by Cobb, or some other

[1] One of these is as follows:—

"Scene I.—Miss *Leake*—Miss *Decamp*—*Walsh*.

"Short dialogue—Nancy persuading Susan to go to the Fair, where there is an entertainment to be given by the Lord of the Manor—Susan melancholy because Henry, her lover, is at sea with the British Admiral—*Song*—Her old mother scolds

such *pedissequus* of the Dramatic Muse. This piece was written, rehearsed, and acted within three days. The first operation of Mr. Sheridan towards it was to order the mechanist of the theatre to get ready two fleets. It was in vain that objections were started to the possibility of equipping these paste-board armaments in so short an interval—Lord Chatham's famous order to Lord Anson was not more peremptory [1]. The two fleets were accordingly ready at the time, and the Duke of Clarence attended the rehearsal of their evolutions. This mixture of the cares of the Statesman and the Ma-

from the cottage—her little brother (*Walsh*) comes from the house, with a message—langhs at his sister's fears, and sings—*Trio.*

SCENE II.—*The Fair.*

"Puppet-show—dancing bear—bells—hurdy-gurdy—recruiting party—song and chorus.

"*Ballet*—D'Egvilie.

"Susan says she has no pleasure, and will go and take a solitary walk.

"SCENE III.—*Dark wood.*

"Susan—gipsy—tells her fortune—recitative and ditty.

"SCENE IV.

"SEA-FIGHT—hell and the devil!

"Henry and Susan meet—Chorus introducing burden, "Rule Britannia."

Among other occasional trifles of this kind, to which Sheridan condescended for the advantage of the theatre, was the pantomime of Robinson Crusoe, brought out, I believe, in 1781, of which he is understood to have been the author. There was a practical joke in this pantomime (where, in pulling off a man's boot, the leg was pulled off with it,) which the famous Delpini laid claim to as his own, and publicly complained of Sheridan's having stolen it from him. The punsters of the day said it was claimed as literary property—being "in usum *Delpini*."

Another of these inglorious tasks of the author of The School for Scandal was the furnishing the first outline or *Programme* of "The Forty Thieves." His brother-in-law, Ward, supplied the dialogue, and Mr. Colman was employed to season it with an infusion of jokes. The following is Sheridan's sketch of one of the scenes:—

"ALI BABA.

"Bannister called out of the cavern boldly by his son—comes out and falls on the ground a long time, not knowing him—says he would only have taken a little gold to keep off misery and save his son, etc.

"Afterwards, when he loads his asses, his son reminds him to be moderate—but it was a promise made to thieves—'it gets nearer the owner, if taken from the stealer'—the son disputes this morality—'they stole it, *ergo*, they have no right to it; and we steal it from the stealer, *ergo*, our title is twice as bad as theirs.'"

[1] For the expedition to the coast of France, after the Convention of Closter-seven.—When he ordered the fleet to be equipped, and appointed the time and place of its rendez vous, Lord Anson said it would be impossible to have it prepared so soon. "It may," said Mr. Pitt, "be done; and if the ships are not ready at the time specified, I shall signify Your Lordship's neglect to the King, and impeach you in the House of Commons." This intimation produced the desired effect: the ships were ready. See Anecdotes of Lord Chatham, vol. i.

nager is one of those whimsical peculiarities that made Sheridan's own life so dramatic, and formed a compound altogether too singular ever to occur again.

In the spring of the following year (1795), we find Mr. Sheridan paying that sort of tribute to the happiness of first marriage which is implied by the step of entering into a second. The lady to whom he now united himself was Miss Esther Jane Ogle, daughter of the Dean of Winchester, and grand-daughter, by the mother's side, of the former Bishop of Winchester. We have here another proof of the ready mine of wealth which the theatre opened,—as in gratitude it ought,— to him who had endowed it with such imperishable treasures. The fortune of the lady being five thousand pounds, he added to it fifteen thousand more, which he contrived to raise by the sale of Drury-Lane shares, and the whole of the sum was subsequently laid out in the purchase from Sir W. Geary of the estate of Polesden, in Surrey, near Leatherhead. The Trustees of this settlement were Mr. Grey (now Lord Grey) and Mr. Whitbread.

To a man at the time of life which Sheridan had now attained—four years beyond that period at which Petrarch thought it decorous to leave off writing love-verses [1]—a union with a young and accomplished girl, ardently devoted to him, must have been like a renewal of his own youth; and it is, indeed, said by those who were in habits of intimacy with him at this period, that they had seldom seen his spirits in a state of more buoyant vivacity. He passed much of his time at the house of his father-in-law near Southampton;—and in sailing about with his lively bride on the Southampton river (in a small cutter called the Phædria, after the magic-boat in the "Fairy Queen,") forgot for a while his debts, his theatre, and his politics. It was on one of these occasions that my friend Mr. Bowles, who was a frequent companion of his parties [2], wrote the following verses, which were much admired, as they well deserved to be, by Sheridan, for the sweetness of their thoughts, and the perfect music of their rhythm:—

"Smooth went our boat upon the summer seas,
Leaving (for so it seem'd) the world behind,
Its cares, its sounds, its shadows: we reclin'd
Upon the sunny deck, heard but the breeze

[1] See his Epistle "ad Posteritatem," where, after lamenting the many years which he had devoted to love, he adds, "Mox vero ad *quadragesimum annum* appropinquans, dum adhuc et caloris satis esset," etc.

[2] Among other distinguished persons present at these excursions, were Mr. Joseph Richardson, Dr. Howley, now Bishop of London, and Mrs. Wilmot, now Lady Dacre, a lady whose various talents,—not the less delightful for being so feminine,—like the groupe of the Graces, reflect beauty on each other.

That o'er us whispering pass'd or idly play'd
With the lithe flag aloft.—A woodland scene
On either side drew its slope line of green,
And hung the water's shining edge with shade.
Above the woods, Netley! thy ruins pale
Peer'd, as we pass'd; and Vecta's [1] azure hue
Beyond the misty castle [2] met the view;
Where in mid channel hung the scarce-seen sail.
So all was calm and sunshine as we went
Cheerily o'er the briny element.
Oh! were this little boat to us the world,
As thus we wander'd far from sounds of care,
Circled with friends and gentle maidens fair,
Whilst morning airs the waving pendant curl'd,
How sweet were life's long voyage, till in peace
We gain'd that haven still, where all things cease!"

The events of this year but added fresh impetus to that reaction upon each other of the Government and the People, which such a system of misrule is always sure to produce. Among the worst effects, as I have already remarked, of the rigorous policy adopted by the Minister, was the extremity to which it drove the principles and language of Opposition, and that sanction which the vehement rebound against oppression of such influencing spirits as Fox and Sheridan seemed to hold out to the obscurer and more practical assertors of freedom. This was at no time more remarkable than in the present Session, during the discussion of those arbitrary measures, the Treason and Sedition Bills, when sparks were struck out, in the collision of the two principles, which the combustible state of public feeling at the moment rendered not a little perilous. On the motion that the House should resolve itself into a Committee upon the Treason Bill, Mr. Fox said, that "if Ministers were determined, by means of the corrupt influence they already possessed in the two Houses of Parliament, to pass these Bills, in violent opposition to the declared sense of the great majority of the nation, and they should be put in force with all their rigorous provisions,—if his opinion were asked by the people as to their obedience, he should tell them, that it was no longer a question of moral obligation and duty, but of prudence." Mr. Sheridan followed in the bold footsteps of his friend, and said, that "if a degraded and oppressed majority of the people applied to him, he would advise them to acquiesce in those bills only as long as resistance was imprudent." This language was, of course, visited with the heavy reprobation of the Ministry;—but their own partizans had already gone as great lengths on the side of absolute power, and it is the nature of such extremes to generate

[1] Isle of Wight.
[2] Kelshot Castle.

each other. Bishop Horsley had preached the doctrine of passive obedience in the House of Lords, asserting that "man's abuse of his delegated authority is to be borne with resignation, like any other of God's judgments; and that the opposition of the individual to the sovereign power is an opposition to God's providential arrangements." The promotion of the Right Reverend Prelate that followed was not likely to abate his zeal in the cause of power; and accordingly, we find him in the present session declaring, in his place in the House of Lords, that "the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them."

The government, too, had lately given countenance to writers, the absurd slavishness of whose doctrines would have sunk below contempt, but for such patronage. Among the ablest of them was Arthur Young,—one of those renegades from the cause of freedom, who, like the incendiary that set fire to the Temple with the flame he had stolen from its altar, turn the fame and the energies which they have acquired in *defence* of liberty *against* her. This gentleman, to whom his situation as Secretary to the Board of Agriculture afforded facilities for the circulation of his political heresies, did not scruple, in one of his pamphlets, roundly to assert, that unequal representation, rotten boroughs, long parliaments, extravagant courts, selfish Ministers, and corrupt majorities, are not only intimately interwoven with the practical freedom of England, but, in a great degree, the causes of it.

But the most active and notorious of these patronised advocates of the Court was Mr. John Reeves,—a person who, in his capacity of President of the Association against Republicans and Levellers, had acted as a sort of Sub-minister of Alarm to Mr. Burke. In a pamphlet, entitled "Thoughts on the English Government," which Mr. Sheridan brought under the notice of the House, as a libel on the Constitution, this pupil of the school of Filmer advanced the startling doctrine, that the Lords and Commons of England derive their existence and authority from the King, and that the Kingly government could go on, in all its functions, without them. This pitiful paradox found an apologist in Mr. Windham, whose chivalry in the new cause he had espoused left Mr. Pitt himself at a wondering distance behind. His speeches in defence of Reeves, (which are among the proofs that remain of that want of equipoise observable in his fine, rather than solid, understanding,) have been, with a judicious charity towards his memory, omitted in the authentic collection by Mr. Amyot.

When such libels against the Constitution were not only promulgated, but acted upon, on one side, it was to be expected, and hardly, perhaps, to be regretted, that the repercussion should be

heard loudly and warningly from the other. Mr. Fox, by a subsequent explanation, softened down all that was most menacing in his language; and, though the word "Resistance," at full length, should, like the hand-writing on the wall, be reserved for the last intoxication of the Belshazzars of this world, a letter or two of it may, now and then, glare out upon their eyes, without producing any thing worse than a salutary alarm amid their revels. At all events, the high and constitutional grounds on which Mr. Fox defended the expressions he had hazarded, may well reconcile us to any risk incurred by their utterance. The tribute to the house of Russell, in the grand and simple passage beginning, "Dear to this country are the descendants of the illustrious Russell," is as applicable to that Noble family now as it was then; and will continue to be so, I trust, as long as a single vestige of a race, so pledged to the cause of liberty, remains.

In one of Mr. Sheridan's speeches on the subject of Reeves's libel, there are some remarks on the character of the people of England, not only candid and just, but, as applied to them at that trying crisis, interesting :—

"Never was there," he said, "any country in which there was so much absence of public principle, and at the same time so many instances of private worth. Never was there so much charity and humanity towards the poor and the distressed; any act of cruelty or oppression never failed to excite a sentiment of general indignation against its authors. It was a circumstance peculiarly strange, that though luxury had arrived to such a pitch, it had so little effect in depraving the hearts and destroying the morals of people in private life, and almost every day produced some fresh example of generous feelings and noble exertions of benevolence. Yet, amidst these phenomena of private virtue, it was to be remarked, that there was an almost total want of public spirit, and a most deplorable contempt of public principle.

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When Great Britain fell, the case would not be with her as with Rome in former times. When Rome fell, she fell by the weight of her own vices. The inhabitants were so corrupted and degraded, as to be unworthy of a continuance of prosperity, and incapable to enjoy the blessings of liberty; their minds were bent to the state in which a reverse of fortune placed them. But when Great Britain falls, she will fall with a people full of private worth and virtue; she will be ruined by the profligacy of the governors, and the security of her inhabitants,—the consequence of those pernicious doctrines which have taught her to place a false confidence in her strength and freedom, and not to look with distrust and apprehension to the misconduct and corruption of those to whom she has trusted the management of her resources."

To this might have been added, that when Great Britain falls, it will not be from either ignorance of her rights, or insensibility to their value, but from that want of energy to assert them which a

high state of civilisation produces. The love of ease that luxury brings along with it,—the selfish and compromising spirit, in which the members of a polished society countenance each other, and which reverses the principle of patriotism, by sacrificing public interests to private ones,—the substitution of intellectual for moral excitement, and the repression of enthusiasm by fastidiousness and ridicule,—these are among the causes that undermine a people,—that corrupt in the very act of enlightening them; till they become, what a French writer calls "*esprits exigeans et caractères complaisans*," and the period in which their rights are best understood may be that in which they most easily surrender them. It is, indeed, with the advanced age of free States, as with that of individuals,—they improve in the theory of their existence as they grow unfit for the practice of it; till, at last, deceiving themselves with the semblance of rights gone by, and refining upon the forms of their institutions after they have lost the substance, they smoothly sink into slavery, with the lessons of liberty on their lips.

Besides the Treason and Sedition Bills, the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was another of the momentous questions which, in this as well as the preceding Session, were chosen as points of assault by Mr. Sheridan, and contested with a vigour and reiteration of attack, which, though unavailing against the massy majorities of the Minister, yet told upon public opinion so as to turn even defeats to account.

The marriage of the Prince of Wales to the Princess Caroline of Brunswick having taken place in the spring of this year, it was proposed by His Majesty to Parliament, not only to provide an establishment for their Royal Highnesses, but to decide on the best manner of liquidating the debts of the Prince, which were calculated at 630,000*l*. On the secession of the leading Whigs, in 1792, His Royal Highness had also separated himself from Mr. Fox, and held no further intercourse either with him or any of his party,—except, occasionally, Mr. Sheridan,—till so late, I believe, as the year 1798. The effects of this estrangement are sufficiently observable in the tone of the Opposition throughout the debates on the Message of the King. Mr. Grey said, that he would not oppose the granting of an establishment to the Prince equal to that of his ancestors; but neither would he consent to the payment of his debts by Parliament. A refusal, he added, to liberate His Royal Highness from his embarrassments would certainly prove a mortification; but it would, at the same time, awaken a just sense of his imprudence. Mr. Fox asked, "Was the Prince well advised in applying to that House on the subject of his debts, after the promise made in 1787?"—and Mr. Sheridan, while he agreed with his friends that the application

should not have been made to Parliament, still gave it as his "positive opinion that the debts ought to be paid immediately, for the dignity of the country and the situation of the Prince, who ought not to be seen rolling about the streets, in his state-coach, as an insolvent prodigal." With respect to the promise given in 1787, and now violated, that the Prince would not again apply to Parliament for the payment of his debts, Mr. Sheridan, with a communicativeness that seemed hardly prudent, put the House in possession of some details of the transaction, which, as giving an insight into Royal character, are worthy of being extracted.

"In 1787, a pledge was given to the House that no more debts should be contracted. By that pledge the Prince was bound as much as if he had given it knowingly and voluntarily. To attempt any explanation of it now would be unworthy of his honour,—as if he had suffered it to be wrung from him, with a view of afterwards pleading that it was against his better judgment, in order to get rid of it. He then advised the Prince not to make any such promise, because it was not be expected that he could himself enforce the details of a system of economy; and although he had men of honour and abilities about him, he was totally unprovided with men of business, adequate to such a task. The Prince said he could not give such a pledge, and agree at the same time to take back his establishment. He (Mr. Sheridan) drew up a plan of retrenchment, which was approved of by the Prince, and afterwards by His Majesty; and the Prince told him that the promise was not to be insisted upon. In the King's Message, however, the promise was inserted,—by whose advice he knew not. He heard it read with surprise, and, on being asked next day by the Prince to contradict it in his place, he enquired whether the Prince had seen the Message before it was brought down. Being told that it had been read to him, but that he did not understand it as containing a promise, he declined contradicting it, and told the Prince that he must abide by it, in whatever way it might have been obtained. By the plan then settled, Ministers had a check upon the Prince's expenditure, which they never exerted, nor enforced adherence to the plan. * * * * * * * * * * *

While Ministers never interfered to check expenses, of which they could not pretend ignorance, the Prince had recourse to means for relieving himself from his embarrassments, which ultimately tended to increase them. It was attempted to raise a loan for him in foreign countries, a measure which he thought unconstitutional, and put a stop to; and, after a consultation with Lord Loughborough, all the bonds were burnt, although with a considerable loss to the Prince. After that, another plan of retrenchment was proposed, upon which he had frequent consultations with Lord Thurlow, who gave the Prince fair, open, and manly advice. That Noble Lord told the Prince, that, after the promise he had made, he must not think of applying to Parliament;—that he must avoid being of any party in politics, but, above all, exposing himself to the suspicion of being influenced in political opinion by his embarrassments;—that the only course he could pursue with honour, was to retire from

public life for a time, and appropriate the greater part of his income to the liquidation of his debts. This plan was agreed upon in the autumn of 1792. Why, it might be asked, was it not carried into effect? About that period His Royal Highness began to receive unsolicited advice from another quarter. He was told by Lord Loughborough, both in words and in writing, that the plan savoured too much of the advice given to M. Egalité, and he could guess from what quarter it came. For his own part, he was then of opinion, that to have avoided meddling in the great political questions which were then coming to be discussed, and to have put his affairs in a train of adjustment, would have better become his high station, and tended more to secure public respect to it, than the pageantry of state-liveries."

The few occasions on which the name of Mr. Sheridan was again connected with literature, after the final investment of his genius in political speculations, were such as his fame might have easily dispensed with;—and one of them, the forgery of the Shakspeare papers, occurred in the course of the present year. Whether it was that he looked over these manuscripts with the eye more of a manager than of a critic, and considered rather to what account the belief in their authenticity might be turned, than how far it was founded upon internal evidence;—or whether, as Mr. Ireland asserts, the standard at which he rated the genius of Shakspeare was not so high as to inspire him with a very watchful fastidiousness of judgment;—certain it is that he was, in some degree, the dupe of this remarkable imposture, which, as a lesson to the self-confidence of criticism, and an exposure of the fallibility of taste, ought never to be forgotten in literary history.

The immediate payment of 300*l*., and a moiety of the profits for the first sixty nights, were the terms upon which Mr. Sheridan purchased the play of Vortigern from the Irelands. The latter part of the conditions was voided the first night; and, though it is more than probable that a genuine tragedy of Shakspeare, if presented under similar circumstances, would have shared the same fate, the public enjoyed the credit of detecting and condemning a counterfeit, which had passed current through some of the most learned and tasteful hands of the day. It is but justice, however, to Mr. Sheridan to add, that, according to the account of Ireland himself, he was not altogether without misgivings during his perusal of the manuscripts, and that his name does not appear among the signatures to that attestation of their authenticity, which his friend Dr. Parr drew up, and was himself the first to sign. The curious statement of Mr. Ireland, with respect to Sheridan's want of enthusiasm for Shakspeare, receives some confirmation from the testimony of Mr. Boaden, the biographer of Kemble, who tells us that "Kemble frequently expressed to him his wonder that

Sheridan should trouble himself *so little* about Shakspeare." This peculiarity of taste,—if it really existed to the degree that these two authorities would lead us to infer,—affords a remarkable coincidence with the opinions of another illustrious genius, lately lost to the world, whose admiration of the great Demiurge of the Drama was leavened with the same sort of heresy.

In the January of this year, Mr. William Stone—the brother of the gentleman whose letter from Paris has been given in a preceding Chapter—was tried upon a charge of High Treason, and Mr. Sheridan was among the witnesses summoned for the prosecution. He had already in the year 1794, in consequence of a reference from Mr. Stone himself, been examined before the Privy Council, relative to a conversation which he had held with that gentleman, and, on the day after his examination, had, at the request of Mr. Dundas, transmitted to that Minister in writing the particulars of his testimony before the Council. There is among his papers a rough draft of this Statement, in comparing which with his evidence upon the trial in the present year, I find rather a curious proof of the faithlessness of even the best memories. The object of the conversation which he had held with Mr. Stone in 1794—and which constituted the whole of their intercourse with each other—was a proposal on the part of the latter, submitted also to Lord Lauderdale and others, to exert his influence in France, through those channels which his brother's residence there opened to him, for the purpose of averting the threatened invasion of England, by representing to the French rulers the utter hopelessness of such an attempt. Mr. Sheridan, on the trial, after an ineffectual request to be allowed to refer to his written Statement, gave the following as part of his recollections of the conversation:—

"Mr. Stone stated that, in order to effect this purpose, he had endeavoured to collect the opinions of several gentlemen, political characters in this country, whose opinions he thought would be of authority sufficient to advance his object; that for this purpose he had had interviews with different gentlemen; he named Mr. Smith and, I think, one or two more, whose names I do not now recollect. He named some gentleman connected with Administration—if the Counsel will remind me of the name——"

Here Mr. Law, the examining Counsel, remarked, that "upon the cross-examination, if the gentlemen knew the circumstance, they would mention it." The cross-examination of Sheridan by Sergeant Adair was as follows:—

"You stated in the course of your examination that Mr. Stone said there was a gentleman connected with Government, to whom he had made a similar communication, should you recollect the name of that

person if you were reminded of it?—I certainly should.—Was it General Murray?—General Murray certainly."

Notwithstanding this, however, it appears from the written Statement in my possession, drawn up soon after the conversation in question, that this "gentleman connected with Government," so difficult to be remembered, was no other than the Prime Minister, Mr. Pitt himself: so little is the memory to be relied upon in evidence, particularly when absolved from responsibility by the commission of its deposit to writing. The conduct of Mr. Sheridan throughout this transaction appears to have been sensible and cautious. That he was satisfied with it himself may be collected from the conclusion of his letter to Mr. Dundas:—"Under the circumstances in which the application (from Mr. Dundas) has been made to me, I have thought it equally a matter of respect to that application and of respect to myself, as well as of justice to the person under suspicion, to give this relation more in detail than at first perhaps might appear necessary. My own conduct in the matter not being in question, I can only say that, were a similar case to occur, I think I should act in every circumstance precisely in the manner I did on this occasion."

The parliamentary exertions of Mr. Sheridan this year, though various and active, were chiefly upon surbordinate questions; and, except in the instance of Mr. Fox's Motion of Censure upon Ministers for advancing money to the Emperor without the consent of Parliament, were not distinguished by any signal or sustained displays of eloquence. The grand questions, indeed, connected with the liberty of the subject had been so hotly contested, that but few new grounds were left on which to renew the conflict. Events, however,—the only teachers of the great mass of mankind,—were beginning to effect what eloquence had in vain attempted. The people of England, though generally eager for war, are seldom long in discovering that "the cup but sparkles near the brim;" and in the occurrences of the following year they were made to taste the full bitterness of the draught. An alarm for the solvency of the Bank, an impending invasion, a mutiny in the fleet, and an organised rebellion in Ireland,—such were the fruits of four years' warfare, and they were enough to startle even the most sanguine and precipitate into reflection.

The conduct of Mr. Sheridan on the breaking out of the Mutiny at the Nore is too well known and appreciated to require any illustration here. It is placed to his credit on the page of history, and was one of the happiest impulses of good feeling and good sense combined, that ever public man acted upon in a situation demanding so much of both. The patriotic promptitude of his interference was

even more striking than it appears in the record of his parliamentary labours; for, as I have heard at but one remove from his own authority, while the Ministry were yet hesitating as to the steps they should take, he went to Mr. Dundas and said, — "My advice is that you cut the buoys on the river — send Sir Charles Grey down to the coast, and set a price on Parker's head. If the Administration take this advice instantly, they will save the country — if not, they will lose it; and, on their refusal, I will impeach them in the House of Commons this very evening."

Without dwelling on the contrast which is so often drawn — less with a view to elevate Sheridan than to depreciate his party — between the conduct of himself and his friends at this fearful crisis, it is impossible not to concede that, on the scale of public spirit, he rose as far superior to them, as the great claims of the general safety transcend all personal considerations and all party ties. It was, indeed, a rare triumph of temper and sagacity. With less temper, he would have seen in this awful peril but an occasion of triumph over the Minister whom he had so long been struggling to overturn—and, with less sagacity, he would have thrown away the golden opportunity of establishing himself for ever in the affections and the memories of Englishmen, as one whose heart was in the common-weal, whatever might be his opinions, and who, in the moment of peril, could sink the partisan in the patriot.

As soon as he had performed this exemplary duty, he joined Mr. Fox and the rest of his friends who had seceded from Parliament about a week before, on the very day after the rejection of Mr. Grey's motion for a Reform. This step, which was intended to create a strong sensation, by hoisting, as it were, the signal of despair to the country, was followed by no such striking effects, and left little behind but a question as to its prudence and patriotism. The public saw, however, with pleasure, that there were still a few champions of the Constitution, who did not "leave her fair side all unguarded" in this extremity. Mr. Tierney, among others, remained at his post, encountering Mr. Pitt on financial questions with a vigour and address to which the latter had been hitherto unaccustomed, and perfecting by practice that shrewd power of analysis, which has made him so formidable a sifter of ministerial sophistries ever since. Sir Francis Burdett, too, was just then entering into his noble career of patriotism; and, like the youthful servant of the temple in Euripides, was aiming his first shafts at those unclean birds, that settle within the sanctuary of the Constitution and sully its treasures :—

" πτηναν τ' αγαλας
Ἀ ῥιπτουσιν
Σεμν' αναθηματα."

By a letter from the Earl of Moira to Col. M'Mahon, in the summer of this year, it appears that, in consequence of the calamitous state of the country, a plan had been in agitation among some members of the House of Commons, who had hitherto supported the measures of the Minister, to form an entirely new Administration, of which the Noble Earl was to be the head, and from which both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, as equally obnoxious to the public, were to be excluded. The only materials that appear to have been forthcoming for this new Cabinet were Lord Moira himself, Lord Thurlow, and Sir William Pulteney — the last of whom it was intended to make Chancellor of the Exchequer. Such a tottering balance of parties, however, could not have been long maintained; and its relapse, after a short interval, into Toryism would but have added to the triumph of Mr. Pitt, and increased his power. Accordingly Lord Moira, who saw from the beginning the delicacy and difficulty of the task, wisely abandoned it. The share that Mr. Sheridan had in this transaction is too honourable to him not to be recorded, and the particulars cannot be better given than in Lord Moira's own words:—

"You say that Mr. Sheridan has been traduced as wishing to abandon Mr. Fox, and to promote a new Administration. I had accidentally a conversation with that gentleman at the House of Lords. I remonstrated strongly with him against a principle which I heard Mr. Fox's friends intended to lay down, namely, that they would support a new Administration, but that not any of them would take part in it. I solemnly declare, upon my honour, that I could not shake Mr. Sheridan's conviction of the propriety of that determination. He said that he and Mr. Fox's other friends, as well as Mr. Fox himself, would give the most energetic support to such an Administration as was in contemplation; but that their acceptance of office would appear an acquiescence under the injustice of the interdict supposed to be fixed upon Mr. Fox. I did not and never can admit the fairness of that argument. But I gained nothing upon Mr. Sheridan, to whose uprightness in that respect I can therefore bear the most decisive testimony. Indeed I am ashamed of offering testimony, where suspicion ought not to have been conceived."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Play of "The Stranger."—Speeches in Parliament.—Pizarro.—Ministry of Mr. Addington.—French Institute.—Negotiation with Mr. Kemble.

THE theatrical season of 1798 introduced to the public the German drama of "The Stranger," translated by Mr. Thompson, and (as we are told by this gentleman in his preface) altered and improved by Sheridan. There is reason, however, to believe that the contributions of the latter to the dialogue were much more consi-

derable than he was perhaps willing to let the translator acknowledge. My friend Mr. Rogers has heard him, on two different occasions, declare that he had written every word of the Stranger from beginning to end; and, as his vanity could not be much interested in such a claim, it is possible that there was at least some virtual foundation for it.

The song introduced in this play, "I have a silent sorrow here," was avowedly written by Sheridan, as the music of it was by the Duchess of Devonshire — two such names, so brilliant in their respective spheres, as the Muses of Song and Verse have seldom had the luck to bring together. The originality of these lines has been disputed; and that expedient of borrowing, which their author *ought* to have been independent of in every way, is supposed to have been resorted to by his indolence on this occasion. Some verses by Tickell are mentioned as having supplied one of the best stanzas: but I am inclined to think, from the following circumstances, that this theft of Sheridan was of that venial and domestic kind — from himself. A writer, who brings forward the accusation in the Gentleman's Magazine (vol. lxxi. p. 904.), thus states his grounds :—

"In a song which I purchased at Bland's music-shop in Holborn in the year 1794, intitled, 'Think not, my love,' and professing to be set to music by Thomas Wright, (I conjecture, Organist of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and composer of the pretty Opera called Rusticity,) are the following words :—

"'This treasured grief, this loved despair,
My lot for ever be;
But, dearest, may the pangs I bear
Be never known to thee!'

"Now, without insisting that the opening thought in Mr. Sheridan's famous song has been borrowed from that of "Think not, my love," the second verse is manifestly such a theft of the lines I have quoted, as entirely overturns Mr. Sheridan's claim to originality in the matter; unless 'Think not, my love,' has been written by him, and he can be proved to have only stolen from himself."

The song to which the writer alludes, "Think not, my love," was given to me, as a genuine production of Mr. Sheridan, by a gentleman nearly connected with his family; and I have little doubt of its being one of those early love-strains which, in his *tempo de' dolci sospiri*, he addressed to Miss Linley. As, therefore, it was but "a feather of his own" that the eagle made free with, he may be forgiven. The following is the whole of the song :—

"Think not, my love, when secret grief
Preys on my saddened heart,
Think not I wish a mean relief,
Or would from sorrow part.

"Dearly I prize the sighs sincere,
That my true fondness prove,
Nor would I wish to check the tear,
That flows from hapless love!

"Alas! tho' doom'd to hope in vain
The joys that love requite,
Yet will I cherish all its pain,
With sad, but dear delight.

"This treasur'd grief, this lov'd despair,
My lot for ever be;
But, dearest, may the pangs I bear
Be never known to thee!"

Among the political events of this year the rebellion of Ireland holds a memorable and fearful pre-eminence. The only redeeming stipulation which the Duke of Portland and his brother Alarmists had annexed to their ill-judged Coalition with Mr. Pitt was, that a system of conciliation and justice should, at last, be adopted towards Ireland. Had they but carried thus much wisdom into the ministerial ranks with them, their defection might have been pardoned for the good it achieved, and, in one respect, at least, would have resembled the policy of those Missionaries, who join in the ceremonies of the Heathen for the purpose of winning him over to the truth. On the contrary, however, the usual consequence of such coalitions with Power ensued, — the good was absorbed in the evil principle, and, by the false hope which it created, but increased the mischief. Lord Fitzwilliam was not only deceived himself, but, still worse to a noble and benevolent nature like his, was made the instrument of deception and mockery to millions. His recall, in 1795, assisted by the measures of his successor, drove Ireland into the rebellion which raged during the present year, and of which the causes have been so little removed from that hour to this, that if the people have become too wise to look back to it as an example, it is assuredly not because their rulers have much profited by it as a lesson.

I am aware that, on the subject of Ireland and her wrongs, I can ill trust myself with the task of expressing what I feel, or preserve that moderate, historical tone, which it has been my wish to maintain through the political opinions of this work. On every other point, my homage to the high character of England, and of her institutions, is prompt and cordial; — on this topic alone my feelings towards her have been taught to wear "the badge of bitterness." As a citizen of the world, I would point to England as its brightest ornament, — but, as a disfranchised Irishman, I blush to belong to her. Instead, therefore, of hazarding any farther reflections of my own on the causes and character of the Rebellion

of 1798, I shall content myself with giving an extract from a Speech which Mr. Sheridan delivered on the subject, in the June of that year :—

"What! when conciliation was held out to the people of Ireland, was there any discontent? When the Government of Ireland was agreeable to the people, was there any discontent? After the prospect of that conciliation was taken away,—after Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled,—after the hopes which had been raised were blasted,—when the spirit of the people was beaten down, insulted, despised, I will ask any gentleman to point out a single act of conciliation which has emanated from the Government of Ireland? On the contrary, has not that country exhibited one continual scene of the most grievous oppression, of the most vexatious proceedings; arbitrary punishments inflicted; torture declared necessary by the highest authority in the sister kingdom next to that of the legislature? And do gentlemen say that the indignant spirit which is roused by such exercise of government is unprovoked? Is this conciliation? is this lenity? Has every thing been done to avert the evils of rebellion? It is the fashion to say, and the Address holds the same language, that the rebellion which now rages in the sister-kingdom has been owing to the machinations of 'wicked men.' Agreeing to the amendment proposed, it was my first intention to move that these words should be omitted. But, Sir, the fact they assert is true. It is, indeed, to the measures of wicked men that the deplorable state of Ireland is to be imputed. It is to those wicked Ministers who have broken the promises they held out; who betrayed the party they seduced into their views, to be the instruments of the foulest treachery that ever was practised against any people. It is to those wicked Ministers who have given up that devoted country to plunder,—resigned it a prey to this faction, by which it has so long been trampled upon, and abandoned it to every species of insult and oppression by which a country was ever overwhelmed, or the spirit of a people insulted, that we owe the miseries into which Ireland is plunged, and the dangers by which England is threatened. These evils are the doings of wicked Ministers, and applied to them, the language of the Address records a fatal and melancholy truth."

The popularity which the conduct of Mr. Sheridan, on the occasion of the Mutiny, had acquired for him, — every where, but among his own immediate party, — seems to have produced a sort of thaw in the rigour of his opposition to Government; and the language which he now began to hold, with respect to the power and principles of France, was such as procured for him, more than once in the course of the present Session, the unaccustomed tribute of compliments from the Treasury-bench. Without, in the least degree, questioning his sincerity in this change of tone, it may be remarked, that the most watchful observer of the tide of public opinion could not have taken it at the turn more seasonably or skilfully. There was, indeed, just at this time a sensible change in the feeling of the country. The dangers to which it had been

reduced were great, but the crisis seemed over. The new wings lent to Credit by the paper currency,—the return of the navy to discipline and victory,—the disenchantment that had taken place with respect to French principles, and the growing persuasion, since strengthened into conviction, that the world has never committed a more gross mistake than in looking to the French as teachers of liberty,—the insulting reception of the late pacific overtures at Lisle, and that never-failing appeal to the pride and spirit of Englishmen, which a threat of invading their sacred shore brings with it,—all these causes concurred, at this moment, to rally the people of England round the Government, and enabled the Minister to extract from the very mischiefs which himself had created the spirit of all others most competent to bear and surmount them. Such is the elasticity of a free country, however, for the moment, misgoverned,—and the only glory due to the Minister under whom such a people, in spite of misgovernment, flourishes, is that of having proved, by the experiment, how difficult it is to ruin them.

While Mr. Sheridan took these popular opportunities of occasionally appearing before the public, Mr. Fox persevered, with but little interruption, in his plan of secession from Parliament altogether. From the beginning of the Session of this year, when, at the instance of his constituents, he appeared in his place to oppose the Assessed Taxes Bill, till the month of February, 1800, he raised his voice in the House but upon two questions—each "dignus vindice,"—the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, and a Change of System in Ireland. He had thrown into his opposition too much real feeling and earnestness to be able, like Sheridan, to soften it down, or shape it to the passing temper of the times. In the harbour of private life alone could that swell subside; and, however the country missed his warning eloquence, there is little doubt that his own mind and heart were gainers by a retirement, in which he had leisure to "prune the ruffled wings" of his benevolent spirit,—to exchange the ambition of being great for that of being useful, and to listen, in the stillness of retreat, to the lessons of a mild wisdom, of which, had his life been prolonged, his country would have felt the full influence.

From one of Sheridan's speeches at this time we find that the change which had lately taken place in his public conduct had given rise to some unworthy imputations upon his motives. There are few things less politic in an eminent public man than a too great readiness to answer accusations against his character. For, as he his, in general, more extensively read or heard than his accusers, the first intimation, in most cases, that the public receives of any charge against him will be from his own answer to it. Neither does the

evil rest here;—for the calumny remains embalmed in the defence, long after its own ephemeral life is gone. To this unlucky sort of sensitiveness Mr. Sheridan was but too much disposed to give way, and accordingly has been himself the chronicler of many charges against him, of which we should have been otherwise wholly ignorant. Of this nature were the imputations founded on his alleged misunderstanding with the Duke of Portland, in 1789, to which I have already made some allusion, and of which we should have known nothing but for his own notice of it. His vindication of himself, in 1795, from the suspicion of being actuated by self-interest, in his connexion with the Prince, or of having received from him (to use his own expressions) "so much as the present of a horse or a picture," is another instance of the same kind, where he has given substance and perpetuity to rumour, and marked out the track of an obscure calumny, which would otherwise have been forgotten. At the period immediately under our consideration he has equally enabled us to collect, from his gratuitous defence of himself, that the line lately taken by him in Parliament, on the great questions of the Mutiny and Invasion, had given rise to suspicions of his political steadiness, and to rumours of his approaching separation from Mr. Fox.

"I am sorry," he said, on one occasion, "that it is hardly possible for any man to speak in this House, and to obtain credit for speaking, from a principle of public spirit; that no man can oppose a Minister without being accused of faction; and none, who usually opposed, can support a Minister, or lend him assistance in any thing, without being accused of doing so from interested motives. I am not such a coxcomb as to say, that it is of much importance what part I may take; or that it is essential that I should divide a little popularity, or some emolument, with the Ministers of the Crown; nor am I so vain as to imagine, that my services might be solicited. Certainly they have not. That might have arisen from want of importance in myself; or from others, whom I have been in the general habit of opposing, conceiving that I was not likely either to give up my general sentiments, or my personal attachments. However that may be, certain it is, they never have made any attempt to apply to me for my assistance."

In reviewing his parliamentary exertions during this year, it would be injustice to pass over his speech on the Assessed Taxes Bill, in which, among other fine passages, the following vehement burst of eloquence occurs:

"But we have gained, forsooth, several ships by the victory of the First of June, by the capture of Toulon, - by the acquisition of those charnel-houses in the West Indies, in which 50,000 men have been lost to this country. Consider the price which has been paid for these successes. For these boasted successes, I will say, give me back the blood of Eng-

lishmen which has been shed in this fatal contest,—give me back the 250 millions of debt which it has occasioned,—give me back the honour of the country, which has been tarnished,—give me back the credit of the country, which has been destroyed,—give me back the solidity of the Bank of England, which has been overthrown; the attachment of the people to their ancient Constitution, which has been shaken by acts of oppression and tyrannical laws,—give me back the kingdom of Ireland, the connexion of which is endangered by a cruel and outrageous system of military coercion,—give me back that pledge of eternal war, which must be attended with inevitable ruin!"

The great success which had attended The Stranger, and the still increasing taste for the German Drama, induced Mr. Sheridan, in the present year, to embark his fame even still more responsibly in a venture to the same romantic shores. The play of Pizarro was brought out on the 24th of May, 1799. The heroic interest of the plot, the splendour of the pageantry, and some skilful appeals to public feeling in the dialogue, obtained for it at once a popularity which has seldom been equalled. As far, indeed, as multiplied representations and editions are a proof of success, the legitimate issue of his Muse might well have been jealous of the fame and fortune of their spurious German relative. When the author of the Critic made Puff say, "Now for my magnificence,—my noise and my procession!" he little anticipated the illustration which, in twenty years afterwards, his own example would afford to that ridicule. Not that in pageantry, when tastefully and subordinately introduced, there is any thing to which criticism can fairly object:—it is the dialogue of this play that is unworthy of its author, and ought never, from either motives of profit or the vanity of success, to have been coupled with his name. The style in which it is written belongs neither to verse or prose, but is a sort of amphibious native of both,—neither gliding gracefully through the former element, nor walking steadily on the other. In order to give pomp to the language, inversion is substituted for metre; and one of the worst faults of poetry, a superfluity of epithet, is adopted, without that harmony which alone makes it venial or tolerable.

It is some relief, however, to discover, from the manuscripts in my possession, that Mr. Sheridan's responsibility for the defects of Pizarro is not very much greater than his claim to a share in its merits. In the plot, and the arrangement of the scenes, it is well known, there is but little alteration from the German original. The omission of the comic scene of Diego, which Kotzebue himself intended to omit,—the judicious suppression of Elvira's love for Alonzo,—the introduction, so striking in representation, of Rolla's passage across the bridge, and the re-appearance of Elvira in the

habit of a nun, form, I believe, the only important points in which the play of Mr. Sheridan deviates from the structure of the original drama. With respect to the dialogue, his share in its composition is reducible to a compass not much more considerable. A few speeches, and a few short scenes, re-written, constitute almost the whole of the contribution he has furnished to it. The manuscript-translation, or rather imitation, of the "Spaniards in Peru," which he used as the ground-work of Pizarro, has been preserved among his papers; —and, so convenient was it to his indolence to take the style as he found it, that, except, as I have said, in a few speeches and scenes, which might be easily enumerated, he adopted, with scarcely any alteration, the exact words of the translator, whose taste, therefore, (whoever he may have been,) is answerable for the spirit and style of three-fourths of the dialogue. Even that scene where Cora describes the "white buds" and "crimson blossoms" of her infant's teeth, which I have often heard cited as a specimen of Sheridan's false ornament, is indebted to this unknown paraphrast for the whole of its embroidery.

But though he is found to be innocent of much of the contraband matter with which his copartner in this work had already vitiated it, his own contributions to the dialogue are not of a much higher or purer order. He seems to have written down to the model before him, and to have been inspired by nothing but an emulation of its faults. His style, accordingly, is kept hovering in the same sort of limbo, between blank verse and prose,—while his thoughts and images, however shining and effective on the stage, are like the diamonds of theatrical royalty, and will not bear inspection off it. The scene between Alonzo and Pizarro, in the third act, is one of those almost entirely rewritten by Sheridan; and the following medley groupe of personifications affords a specimen of the style to which his taste could descend :—

"Then would I point out to him where now, in clustered villages, they live like brethren, social and confiding, while through the burning day Content sits basking on the cheek of Toil, till laughing Pastime leads them to the hour of rest."

The celebrated harangue of Rolla to the Peruvians into which Kemble used to infuse such heroic dignity, is an amplification of the following sentences of the original, as I find them given in Lewis's manuscript translation of the play :—

"*Rolla.* You Spaniards fight for gold; we for our country.

"*Alonzo.* They follow an adventurer to the field; we a monarch whom we love.

"*Atalib.* And a god whom we adore!"

This speech, to whose popular sentiments the play owed much of its success, was chiefly made up by Sheridan of loans from his own oratory. The image of the Vulture and the Lamb was taken, as I have already remarked, from a passage in his speech on the trial of Hastings;—and he had, on the subject of Invasion, in the preceding year (1798), delivered more than once the substance of those patriotic sentiments, which were now so spirit-stirring in the mouth of Rolla. For instance, on the King's Message relative to preparation for Invasion:—

"The Directory may instruct their guards to make the fairest professions of how their army is to act; but of these professions surely not one can be believed. The victorious Bonaparte may say that he comes like a minister of grace, with no other purpose than to give peace to the cottager, to restore citizens to their rights, to establish real freedom, and a liberal and humane government. But can there be an Englishman so stupid, so besotted, so befooled, as to give a moment's credit to such ridiculous professions? . . . . What, then, is their object? They come for what they really want: they come for ships, for commerce, for credit, and for capital. Yes; they come for the sinews, the bones—for the marrow and the very heart's blood of Great Britain. But let us examine what we are to purchase at this price. Liberty, it appears, is now their staple commodity: but attend, I say, and examine how little of real liberty they themselves enjoy, who are so forward and prodigal in bestowing it on others."

The speech of Rolla in the prison-scene is also an interpolation of his own,—Kotzebue having, far more judiciously, (considering the unfitness of the moment for a *tirade*,) condensed the reflections of Rolla into the short exclamation, "Oh, sacred Nature! thou art still true to thyself," and then made him hurry into the prison to his friend.

Of the translation of this play by Lewis, which has been found among the papers, Mr. Sheridan does not appear to have made any use;—except in so far as it may have suggested to him the idea of writing a song for Cora, of which that gentleman had set him an example in a ballad beginning,

"Soft are thy slumbers, soft and sweet;
Hush thee, hush thee, hush thee, boy."

The song of Mr. Lewis, however, is introduced, with somewhat less violence to probability, at the beginning of the Third Act, where the women are waiting for the tidings of the battle, and when the intrusion of a ballad from the heroine, though sufficiently unnatural, is not quite so monstrous as in the situation which Sheridan has chosen for it.

The following stanza formed a part of the song, as it was originally written:—

"Those eyes that beam'd this morn the light of youth,
This morn I saw their gentle rays impart
The day-spring sweet of hope, of love, of truth,
The pure Aurora of my lover's heart.
Yet wilt thou rise, oh Sun, and waste thy light,
While my Alonzo's beams are quench'd in night."

The only question upon which he spoke this year was the important measure of the union, which he strenuously and at great length opposed. Like every other measure, professing to be for the benefit of Ireland, the Union has been left incomplete in the one essential point, without which there is no hope of peace or prosperity for that country. As long as religious disqualification is left to "lie like lees at the bottom of men's hearts[1]," in vain doth the voice of Parliament pronounce the word "Union" to the two islands,—a feeling, deep as the sea that breaks between them, answers back, sullenly, "Separation."

Through the remainder of Mr. Sheridan's political career it is my intention, for many reasons, to proceed with a more rapid step; and merely to give the particulars of his public conduct, together with such documents as I can bring to illustrate it, without entering into much discussion or comment on either.

Of his speeches in 1800,- during which year, on account perhaps, of the absence of Mr. Fox from the House, he was particularly industrious,— I shall select a few brief specimens for the reader. On the question of the Grant to the Emperor of Germany, he said:—

"I do think, Sir, Jacobin principles never existed much in this country; and, even admitting they had, I say they have been found so hostile to true liberty, that, in proportion as we love it, (and, whatever may be said, I must still consider liberty an inestimable blessing,) we must hate and detest these principles. But, more,—I do not think they even exist in France. They have there died the best of deaths; a death I am more pleased to see than if it had been effected by foreign force,—they have stung themselves to death, and died by their own poison."

The following is a concise and just summary of the cause and effects of the French Revolutionary War:—

"France, in the beginning of the Revolution, had conceived many romantic notions; she was to put an end to war, and produce, by a pure form of government, a perfectibility of mind which before had never been realised. The Monarchs of Europe, seeing the prevalence of these new principles, trembled for their thrones. France, also, perceiving the hostility of Kings to her projects, supposed she could not be a Republic without the overthrow of thrones. Such has been the regular progress of

[1] "It lay like lees at the bottom of men's hearts; and, if the vessel was but stirred, it would come up."—Bacon, Henry VII.

cause and effect; but who was the first aggressor, with whom the jealousy first arose, need not now be a matter of discussion. Both the Republic and the Monarchs who opposed her acted on the same principles;—the latter said they must exterminate Jacobins, and the former that they must destroy Monarchs. From this source have all the calamities of Europe flowed; and it is now a waste of time and argument to inquire farther into the subject."

Adverting, in his Speech on the Negotiation with France, to the overture that had been made for a Maritime Truce, he says, with that national feeling, which rendered him at this time so popular,—

"No consideration for our ally, no hope of advantage to be derived from joint negotiation, should have induced the English Government to think for a moment of interrupting the course of our naval triumphs.—This measure, Sir, would have broken the heart of the navy, and would have damped all its future exertions. How would our gallant sailors have felt, when, chained to their decks like galley-slaves, they saw the enemy's vessels sailing under their bows in security, and proceeding, without a possibility of being molested, to revictual those places which had been so long blockaded by their astonishing skill, perseverance, and valour? We never stood more in need of their services, and their feelings at no time deserved to be more studiously consulted. The north of Europe presents to England a most awful and threatening aspect. Without giving an opinion as to the origin of these hostile dispositions, or pronouncing decidedly whether they are wholly ill-founded, I hesitate not to say, that if they have been excited because we have insisted upon enforcing the old established Maritime Law of Europe,—because we stood boldly forth in defence of indisputable privileges,—because we have refused to abandon the source of our prosperity, the pledge of our security, and the foundation of our naval greatness,—they ought to be disregarded or set at defiance. If we are threatened to be deprived of that which is the charter of our existence, which has procured us the commerce of the world, and been the means of spreading our glory over every land,—if the rights and honours of our flag are to be called in question, every risk should be run, and every danger braved. Then we should have a legitimate cause of war;—then the heart of every Briton would burn with indignation, and his hand be stretched forth in defence of his country. If our flag is to be insulted, let us nail it to the topmast of the nation; there let it fly, while we shed the last drop of our blood in protecting it, and let it be degraded only when the nation itself is overwhelmed."

He thus ridicules, in the same speech, the etiquette that had been observed in the selection of the ministers who were to confer with Mr. Otto:—

"This stiff-necked policy shows insincerity. I see Mr. Nepean and Mr. Hammond also appointed to confer with Mr. Otto, because they are of the same rank. Is not this as absurd as if Lord Whitworth were to be sent to Petersburgh, and told that he was not to treat but with some

gentleman of six feet high, and as handsome as himself? Sir, I repeat that this is a stiff-necked policy, when the lives of thousands are at stake."

In the following year Mr. Pitt was succeeded, as Prime Minister, by Mr. Addington. The cause assigned for this unexpected change was the difference of opinion that existed between the King and Mr. Pitt, with respect to the further enfranchisement of the Catholics of Ireland. To this measure the Minister and some of his colleagues considered themselves to have been pledged by the Act of Union; but, on finding that they could not carry it, against the scruples of their Royal Master, resigned.

Though Mr. Pitt so far availed himself of this alleged motive of his abdication as to found on it rather an indecorous appeal to the Catholics, in which he courted popularity for himself at the expense of that of the King, it was suspected that he had other and less disinterested reasons for his conduct. Indeed, while he took merit to himself for thus resigning his supremacy, he well knew that he still commanded it with "a falconer's voice," and, whenever he pleased, "could lure the tassel-gentle back again." The facility with which he afterwards returned to power, without making any stipulation for the measure now held to be essential, proves either that the motive now assigned for his resignation was false, or that, having sacrificed power to principle in 1801, he took revenge by making principle, in its turn, give way to power in 1804.

During the early part of the new administration, Mr. Sheridan appears to have rested on his arms.—having spoken so rarely and briefly throughout the session as not to have furnished to the collector of his speeches a single specimen of oratory worth recording. It is not till the discussion of the Definitive Treaty, in May, 1802, that he is represented as having professed himself friendly to the existing Ministry: — "Certainly," he said, "I have in several respects given my testimony in favour of the present Ministry, — in nothing more than for making the best peace, perhaps, they could, after their predecessors had left them in such a deplorable situation." It was on this occasion, however, that, in ridiculing the understanding supposed to exist between the Ex-minister and his successor, he left such marks of his wit on the latter as all his subsequent friendship could not efface. Among other remarks, full of humour, he said,—

"I should like to support the present Minister on fair ground; but what is he? a sort of *outside passenger*,—or rather a man leading the horses round a corner, while reins, whip, and all, are in the hands of the coachman on the *box!* (*looking at Mr. Pitt's elevated seat, three or four benches above that of the Treasury.*) Why not have an union of the two Ministers, or, at least, some intelligible connexion? When the Ex-

minister quitted office, almost all the *subordinate* Ministers kept their places. How was it that the whole family did not move together? Had he only one *covered waggon* to carry *friends and goods?* or has he left directions behind him that they may know where to call? I remember a fable of *Aristophanes's*, which is translated from Greek into decent English. —I mention this for the country gentlemen. It is of a man that sat so long on a seat (about as long, perhaps, as the Ex-minister did on the Treasury-bench), that he grew to it. When Hercules pulled him off, he left all the sitting part of the man behind him. The House can make the allusion '."

We have here an instance, in addition to the many which I have remarked, of his adroitness, not only in laying claim to all *waifs* of wit, "*ubi non apparebat dominus*," but in stealing the wit himself, wherever he could find it. This happy application of the fable of Hercules and Theseus to the Ministry had been first made by Gilbert Wakefield, in a Letter to Mr. Fox, which the latter read to Sheridan a few days before the Debate; and the only remark that Sheridan made, on hearing it, "What an odd pedantic fancy!" But the wit knew well the value of the jewel that the pedant had raked up, and lost no time in turning it to account, with all his accustomed skill. The letter of Wakefield, in which the application of the fable occurs, has been omitted, I know not why, in his published Correspondence with Mr. Fox: but a letter of Mr. Fox, in the same collection, thus alludes to it: — "Your story of Theseus is excellent, as applicable to our present rulers: if you could point out to me where I could find it, I should be much obliged to you. The Scholiast on Aristophanes is too wide a description." Mr. Wake-

' The following is another highly humorous passage from this Speech:—

"But let France have colonies! Oh, yes! let her have a good trade, that she may be afraid of war, says the Learned Member,—that's the way to make Bonaparte love peace. He has had, to be sure, a sort of military education. He has been abroad, and is rather *rough company;* but if you put him behind the *counter* a little, he will mend exceedingly. When I was reading the Treaty, I thought all the names of foreign places, viz. Pondicherry, Chandenagore, Cochin, Martinico, etc. all *cessions*. Not they,—they are all so many *traps* and *holes* to catch this silly fellow in, and make a *merchant* of him! I really think the best way upon this principle would be this:—let the merchants of London open a *public subscription*, and set him up at once. I hear a great deal respecting a certain *statue* about to be erected to the Right Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Pitt) now in my eye, at a great expense. Send all that money over to the First Consul, and give him, what you talk of so much, *Capital*, to begin trade with. I hope the Right Honourable Gentleman over the way will, like the First Consul, refuse a statue for the present, and postpone it as a work to posterity. There is no harm, however, in marking out the place. The Right Honourable Gentleman is musing, perhaps, on what square, or place, he will choose for its erection. I recommend the *Bank of England*. Now for the material. Not gold: no, no!—he has not left enough of it. I should, however, propose *papier mâché* and old bank-notes!"

field, in his answer, says,—"My Aristophanes, with the Scholia, is not here. If I am right in my recollection, the story probably occurs in the Scholia on the Frogs, and would soon be found by reference to the name of Theseus, in Kuster's Index."

Another instance of this propensity in Sheridan (which made him a sort of Catiline in wit, "covetous of another's wealth, and profuse of his own.") occurred during the preceding Session. As he was walking down to the House with Sir Philip Francis and another friend, on the day when the Address of Thanks on the Peace was moved, Sir Philip Francis pithily remarked, that "it was a Peace which every one would be glad of, but no one would be proud of." Sheridan, who was in a hurry to get to the House, did not appear to attend to the observation:—but before he had been many minutes in his seat, he rose, and, in the course of a short speech (evidently made for the purpose of passing his stolen coin as soon as possible), said, "This, Sir, is a peace which every one will be glad of, but no one can be proud of[1]."

The following letter from Dr. Parr to Sheridan, this year, records an instance of delicate kindness which renders it well worthy of preservation:—

"Dear Sir,

"I believe that you and my old pupil Tom feel a lively interest in my happiness, and, therefore, I am eager to inform you, that without any solicitation, and in the most handsome manner, Sir Francis Burdett has offered me the rectory of Graffham, in Huntingdonshire; that the yearly value of it now amounts to 200*l.*, and is capable of considerable improvement; that the preferment is tenable with my Northamptonshire rectory: that the situation is pleasant; and that, by making it my place of residence, I shall be nearer to my respectable scholar and friend, Edward Maltby, to the University of Cambridge, and to those Norfolk connexions which I value most highly.

"I am not much skilled in ecclesiastical negociations; and all my efforts to avail myself of the very obliging kindness conditionally intended for me by the Duke of Norfolk completely failed. But the noble friendship of Sir Francis Burdett has set every thing right. I cannot refuse myself the great satisfaction of laying before you the concluding passage in Sir Francis's letter:—

"'I acknowledge that a great additional motive with me to the offer I now make Dr. Parr is, that I believe I cannot do any thing more pleasing to his friends, Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and Mr. Knight; and I desire you, Sir, to consider yourself as obliged to them only.'

"You will readily conceive, that I was highly gratified with this

[1] A similar theft was his observation, that "half the Debt of England had been incurred in pulling down the Bourbons, and the other half in setting them up"—which pointed remark he had heard, in conversation, from Sir Arthur Pigott.

striking and important passage, and that I wish for an early opportunity of communicating with yourself, and Mr. Fox, and Mr. Knight.

"I beg my best compliments to Mrs. Sheridan and Tom; and I have the honour to be, Dear Sir, your very faithful well-wisher, and respectful, obedient Servant,

"*September* 27. *Buckden.* "S. PARR.

"Sir Francis sent his own servant to my house at Hilton with the letter; and my wife, on reading it, desired the servant to bring it to me at Buckden, near Huntingdon, where I yesterday received it."

It was about this time that the Primary Electors of the National Institute of France having proposed Haydn, the great composer, and Mr. Sheridan, as candidates for the class of Literature and the Fine Arts, the Institute, with a choice not altogether indefensible, elected Haydn. Some French epigrams on this occurrence, which appeared in the Courier, seem to have suggested to Sheridan the idea of writing a few English *jeux d'esprit* on the same subject, which were intended for the news-papers, but, I rather think, never appeared. These verses show that he was not a little piqued by the decision of the Institute; and the manner in which he avails himself of his anonymous character to speak of his own claims to the distinction, is, it must be owned, less remarkable for modesty than for truth. But Vanity, thus in masquerade, may be allowed some little licence. The following is a specimen: —

"The wise decision all admire;
'Twas just, beyond dispute—
Sound taste! which, to Apollo's lyre
Preferr'd—a German flute!"

Mr. Kemble, who had been for some time Manager of Drury-Lane Theatre, was, in the course of the year 1800-1, tempted, notwithstanding the knowledge which his situation must have given him of the embarrassed state of the concern, to enter into negotiation with Sheridan for the purchase of a share in the property. How much anxiety the latter felt to secure such an associate in the establishment appears strongly from the following paper, drawn up by him, to accompany the documents submitted to Kemble during the negotiation, and containing some particulars of the property of Drury-Lane, which will be found not uninteresting:—

"Outline of the Terms on which it is proposed that Mr. Kemble shall purchase a Quarter in the Property of Drury-Lane Theatre.

"I really think there cannot be a negotiation, in matter of purchase and sale, so evidently for the advantage of both parties, if brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

"I am decided that the management of the theatre cannot be respected, or successful, but in the hands of an actual proprietor; and still the

better, if he is himself in the profession, and at the head of it. I am desirous, therefore, that Mr. Kemble should be a proprietor and manager.

"Mr. Kemble is the person, of all others, who must naturally be desirous of both situations. He is at the head of his profession, without a rival; he is attached to it and desirous of elevating its character. He may be assured of proper respect, etc. while I have the theatre; but I do not think he could brook his situation were the property to pass into vulgar and illiberal hands,—an event which he knows contingencies might produce. Laying aside, then, all affectation of indifference, so common in making bargains, let us set out with acknowledging that it is mutually our interest to agree, if we can. At the same time, let it be avowed, that I must be considered as trying to get as good a price as I can, and Mr. Kemble to buy as cheap as he can. In parting with theatrical property there is no standard, or measure, to direct the price: the whole question is, what are the probable profits, and what is such a proportion of them worth?

"I bought of Mr. Garrick at the rate of 70,000*l.* for the whole theatre, I bought of Mr. Lacey at the rate of 95,000*l.* ditto. I bought of Dr. Ford at the rate of 86,000*l.* ditto. In all these cases there was a perishable patent, and an expiring lease, each having to run, at the different periods of the purchases, from ten to twenty years only.

"All these purchases have undoubtedly answered well; but in the chance of a Third Theatre consisted the risk; and the want of size and accommodation must have produced it, had the theatres continued as they were. But the *great* and *important feature* in the present property, and which is never for a moment to be lost sight of, is, that the Monopoly is, morally speaking, established for ever, at least as well as the Monarchy, Constitution, Public Funds, etc.,—as appears by No. 1, being the copy of 'The Final Arrangement' signed by the Lord Chamberlain, by authority of His Majesty, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Bedford, etc.; and the dormant patent of Covent-Garden, that former terror of Drury-Lane, is perpetually annexed to the latter. So that the value of Drury-Lane at present, and in the former sales, is out of all comparison,—independently of the new building, superior size, raised prices, etc. etc. But the incumbrances on the theatre, whose annual charge must be paid before there can be any surplus profit, are much greater than in Mr. Garrick's time, or on the old theatre afterwards. Undoubtedly they are, and very considerably greater; but what is the proportion in the receipts? Mr. Garrick realised and left a fortune of 140,000*l.* (having lived, certainly, at no mean expense), acquired in — years, on an average annual receipt of 25,000*l.* (qu. this?) Our receipts cannot be stated at less than 60,000*l.* per ann.; and it is demonstrable that preventing the most palpable frauds and abuses, with even a tolerable system of exertion in the management, must bring it, at the least, to 75,000*l.*; and this estimate does not include the advantages to be derived from the new tavern, passages, Chinese hall, etc.,—an aid to the receipt, respecting the amount of which I am very sanguine. What, then, is the probable profit, and what is a quarter of it worth? No. 3 is the amount of three seasons' receipts, the only ones on which an attempt at an average could be justifiable. No. 4. is the future estimate, on a sys-

tem of exertion and good management. No. 5. the actual annual incumbrances. No. 6 the nightly expenses. No. 7. the estimated profits. Calculating on which, I demand, for a quarter of the property * * * * reserving to myself the existing private boxes, but no more to be created, and the fruit-offices and houses not part of the theatre.

"I assume that Mr. Kemble and I agree as to the price, annexing the following conditions to our agreement:—Mr. Kemble shall have his engagement as an actor for any rational time he pleases. Mr. Kemble shall be manager, with a clear salary of 500 guineas per annum, and * * per cent. on the clear profits. Mr. Sheridan engages to procure from Messrs. Hammersleys a loan to Mr. Kemble of ten thousand pounds, part of the purchase-money, for four years, for which loan he is content to become collateral security, and also to leave his other securities, now in their hands, in mortgage for the same. And for the payment of the rest of the money, Mr. Sheridan is ready to give Mr. Kemble every facility his circumstances will admit of. It is not to be overlooked, that if a private box is also made over to Mr. Kemble, for the whole term of the theatre lease, its value cannot be stated at less than 350*l.* Indeed, it might at any time produce to Mr. Kemble, or his assigns, 300*l.* per annum. Vide No. 8. This is a material deduction from the purchase-money to be paid.

"Supposing all this arrangement made, I conceive Mr. Kemble's income would stand thus:—

	L.	*s.*	*d.*
Salary as an actor	1050	0	0
In lieu of benefit, ...	315	0	0
As manager, ...	525	0	0
Per centage on clear profit, ...	300	0	0
Dividend on quarter-share, . . . [1]	2500	0	0
	L. 4690	0	0

"I need not say how soon this would clear the whole of the purchase. With regard to the title, etc., Mr. Crews and Mr. Pigott are to decide. As to debts, the share must be made over to Mr. Kemble free from a claim even; and for this purpose all demands shall be called in, by public advertisement, to be sent to Mr. Kemble's own solicitor. In short, Mr. Crews shall be satisfied that there does not exist an unsatisfied demand on the theatre, or a possibility of Mr. Kemble being involved in the risk of a shilling. Mr. Hammersley, or such person as Mr. Kemble and Mr. Sheridan shall agree on, to be Treasurer, and receive and account for the whole receipts, pay the charges, trusts, etc.; and at the close of the season, the surplus profits to the proprietors. A clause in case of death, or sale, to give the refusal to each other."

The following letter from Sheridan to Kemble, in answer, as it appears, to some complaint or remonstrance from the latter, in his capacity of Manager, is too curiously characteristic of the writer to be omitted:—

[1] "I put this on the very lowest speculation."

"DEAR KEMBLE,

"If I had not a real good opinion of your principles and intentions upon all subjects, and a very bad opinion of your nerves and philosophy upon some, I should take very ill indeed, the letter I received from you this evening.

"That the management of the theatre is a situation capable of becoming *troublesome* is information which I do not want, and a discovery which I thought you had made long since.

"I should be sorry to write to you gravely on your offer, because I must consider it as a nervous flight, which it would be as unfriendly in me to notice seriously, as it would be in you seriously to have made it.

"What I am most serious in is a determination that, while the theatre is indebted, and others, for it and for me, are so involved and pressed as they are, I will exert myself, and give every attention and judgment in my power to the establishment of its interests. In you I hoped, and do hope, to find an assistant, on principles of liberal and friendly confidence,—I mean confidence that should be above touchiness and reserve, and that should trust to me to estimate the value of that assistance.

"If there is any thing amiss in your mind, not arising from the *troublesomeness* of your situation, it is childish and unmanly not to disclose it to me. The frankness with which I have always dealt towards you entitles me to expect that you should have done so.

"But I have no reason to believe this to be the case; and, attributing your letter to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged, I prescribe that you shall keep your appointment at the Piazza Coffee-house, to-morrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it.

"R. B. SHERIDAN."

CHAPTER XIX.

State of Parties.—Offer of a place to Mr. T. Sheridan.—Receivership of the Duchy of Cornwall bestowed upon Mr. Sheridan.—Return of Mr. Pitt to Power.—Catholic question.—Administration of Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox.—Death of Mr. Fox.—Representation of Westminster.—Dismission of the Ministry.—Theatrical Negotiation.—Spanish Question.—Letter to the Prince.

DURING the short interval of peace into which the country was now lulled.—like a ship becalmed for a moment in the valley between two vast waves,—such a change took place in the relative positions and bearings of the parties that had been so long arrayed against each other, and such new boundaries and divisions of opinion were formed, as considerably altered the map of the political world. While Mr. Pitt lent his sanction to the new Administration, they who had made common cause with him in resigning, violently

opposed it; and, while the Ministers were thus thwarted by those who had hitherto always agreed with them, they were supported by those Whigs with whom they had before most vehemently differed. Among this latter class of their friends was, as I have already remarked, Mr. Sheridan, — who, convinced that the only chance of excluding Mr. Pitt from power lay in strengthening the hands of those who were in possession, not only gave them the aid of his own name and eloquence, but endeavoured to impress the same views upon Mr. Fox, and exerted his influence also to procure the sanction of Carlton-House in their favour.

It cannot, indeed, be doubted that Sheridan, at this time, though still the friend of Mr. Fox, had ceased, in a great degree, to be his follower. Their views with respect to the renewal of the war were wholly different, while Sheridan joined in the popular feeling against France, and showed his knowledge of that great instrument, the Public Mind, by approaching it only with such themes as suited the martial mood to which it was tuned, the too confiding spirit of Fox breathed nothing but forbearance and peace;—and he who, in 1786, had proclaimed the "natural enmity" of England and France, as an argument against their commercial intercourse, now asked, with the softened tone which time and retirement had taught him, "whether France was *for ever* to be considered our rival'?"

The following characteristic note, written by him previously to the debate on the army Estimates, (December 8, 1802,) shows a consciousness that the hold which he had once had upon his friend was loosened:—

"Dear Sheridan,

"I mean to be in town for Monday,—that is, for the Army. As for to-morrow, it is no matter;—I am *for* a largish fleet, though perhaps not quite so large as they mean. Pray, do not be absent Monday, and let me have a quarter of an hour's conversation before the business begins. Remember, I do not wish you to be inconsistent, at any rate. Pitt's opinion by Proxy is ridiculous beyond conception, and I hope you will show it in that light. I am very much against your abusing Bonaparte, because I am sure it is impolitic both for the country and ourselves. But, as you please;—only, for God's sake, Peace[2].

"Yours ever,

"*Tuesday night.* "C. J. Fox."

It was about this period that the writer of these pages had, for the first time, the gratification of meeting Mr. Sheridan, at Donington-Park, the seat of the present Marquis of Hastings;— a cir-

[1] Speech on the Address of Thanks, in 1803.

[2] These last words are an interesting illustration of the line in Mr. Rogers's Verses on this statesman:—

"'Peace,' when he spoke, was ever on his tongue."

cumstance which he recalls, not only with those lively impressions that our first admiration of genius leaves behind, but with many other dreams of youth and hope, that still endear to him the mansion where that meeting took place, and among which gratitude to its noble owner is the only one, perhaps, that has not faded. Mr. Sheridan, I remember, was just then furnishing a new house, and talked of a plan he had of levying contributions on his friends for a library. A set of books from each would, he calculated, amply accomplish it, and already the intimation of his design had begun to "breathe a soul into the silent walls '." The splendid and well-chosen library of Donington was, of course, not slow in furnishing its contingent; and little was it foreseen into what badges of penury these gifts of friendship would be converted at last.

As some acknowledgment of the services which Sheridan had rendered to the Ministry, (though professedly as a tribute to his public character in general,) Lord St. Vincent, about this time, made an offer to his son, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, of the place of Registrar of the Vice-Admiralty Court of Malta, — an office which, during a period of war, is supposed to be of considerable emolument. The first impulse of Sheridan, when consulted on the proposal, was, as I have heard, not unfavourable to his son's acceptance of it. But, on considering the new position which he had, himself, lately taken in politics, and the inference that might be drawn against the independence of his motives, if he submitted to an obligation which was but too liable to be interpreted, as less a return for past services than a *lien* upon him for future ones, he thought it safest for his character to sacrifice the advantage, and, desirable as was the provision for his son, obliged him to decline it.

The following passages of a letter to him from Mrs. Sheridan on this subject do the highest honour to her generosity, spirit, and good sense. They also confirm what has generally been understood, that the King, about this time, sent a most gracious message to Sheridan, expressive of the approbation with which he regarded his public conduct, and of the pleasure he should feel in conferring upon him some mark of his Royal favour: —

"I am more anxious than I can express about Tom's welfare. It is indeed unfortunate that you have been obliged to refuse these things for him, but surely there could not be two opinions; yet why will you neglect to observe those attentions that honour does not compel you to refuse? Don't you know that when once the King takes offence, he was never known to forgive? I suppose it would be impossible to have your motives explained to him, because it would touch his weak side, yet any thing is better than his attributing your refusal to contempt and

' Rogers.

indifference. Would to God I could bear these necessary losses instead of Tom, particularly as I so entirely approve of your conduct."

"I trust you will be able to do something positive for Tom about money. I am willing to make any sacrifice in the world for that purpose, and to live in any way whatever. Whatever he has *now* ought to be certain, or how will he know how to regulate his expenses?"

The fate, indeed, of young Sheridan was peculiarly tantalizing. Born and brought up in the midst of those bright hopes, which so long encircled his father's path, he saw them all die away as he became old enough to profit by them, leaving difficulty and disappointment, his only inheritance, behind. Unprovided with any profession by which he could secure his own independence, and shut out, as in this instance, from those means of advancement, which, it was feared, might compromise the independence of his father, he was made the victim even of the distinction of his situation, and paid dearly for the glory of being the son of Sheridan. In the expression of his face, he resembled much his beautiful mother, and derived from her also the fatal complaint of which he died. His popularity in society was unexampled,—but he knew how to attach as well as amuse; and, though living chiefly with that class of persons, who pass over the surface of life, like Camilla over the corn, without leaving any impression of themselves behind, he had manly and intelligent qualities, that deserved a far better destiny. There are, indeed, few individuals, whose lives have been so gay and thoughtless, whom so many remember with cordiality and interest; and, among the numerous instances of discriminating good nature, by which the private conduct of His Royal Highness the Duke of York is distinguished, there are none that do him more honour than his prompt and efficient kindness to the interesting family that the son of Sheridan has left behind him.

Soon after the Declaration of War against France, when an immediate invasion was threatened by the enemy, the Heir Apparent, with the true spirit of an English Prince, came forward to make an offer of his personal service to the country. A correspondence upon the subject, it is well known, ensued, in the course of which His Royal Highness addressed letters to Mr. Addington, to the Duke of York, and the King. It has been sometimes stated that these letters were from the pen of Mr. Sheridan; but the first of the series was written by Sir Robert Wilson, and the remainder by Lord Hutchinson.

The death of Joseph Richardson, which took place this year, was felt as strongly by Sheridan as any thing *can* be felt by those who, in the whirl of worldly pursuits, revolve too rapidly round Self, to let any thing rest long upon their surface. With a fidelity

to his old habits of unpunctuality, at which the shade of Richardson might have smiled, he arrived too late at Bagshot for the funeral of his friend, but succeeded in persuading the good-natured clergyman to perform the ceremony over again. Mr. John Taylor, a gentleman, whose love of good-fellowship and wit has made him the welcome associate of some of the brightest men of his day, was one of the assistants at this singular scene, and also joined in the party at the inn at Bedfont afterwards, where Sheridan, it is said, drained the "Cup of Memory" to his friend, till he found oblivion at the bottom.

At the close of the session of 1803, that strange diversity of opinions, into which the two leading parties were decomposed by the resignation of Mr. Pitt, had given way to new varieties, both of cohesion and separation, quite as little to be expected from the natural affinities of the ingredients concerned in them. Mr. Pitt, upon perceiving, in those to whom he had delegated his power, an inclination to surround themselves with such strength from the adverse ranks as would enable them to contest his resumption of the trust, had gradually withdrawn the sanction which he at first afforded them, and taken his station by the side of the other two parties in opposition, without, however, encumbering himself, in his views upon office, with either. By a similar movement, though upon different principles, Mr. Fox and the Whigs, who had begun by supporting the Ministry against the strong War-party of which Lord Grenville and Mr. Windham were the leaders, now entered into close co-operation with this new Opposition, and seemed inclined to forget both recent and ancient differences in a combined assault upon the tottering Administration of Mr. Addington.

The only parties, perhaps, that acted with consistency through these transactions, were Mr. Sheridan and the few who followed him on one side, and Lord Grenville and his friends on the other. The support which the former had given to the Ministry,—from a conviction that such was the true policy of his party,—he persevered in, notwithstanding the suspicions it drew down upon him, to the last: and, to the last, deprecated the connexion with the Grenvilles, as entangling his friends in the same sort of hollow partnership, out of which they had come bankrupts in character and confidence before[1]. In like manner, it must be owned, the Opposition, of which

[1] In a letter written this year by Mr. Thomas Sheridan to his father, there is the following passage:—

"I am glad you intend writing to Lord——; he is *quite right* about politics,—reprobates the idea most strongly of any union with the Grenvilles, etc., which, he says, he sees is Fox's leaning. 'I agreed with your father perfectly on the subject, when I left him in town; but when I saw Charles at St. Ann's Hill, I perceived he was wrong and obstinate.'"

Lord Grenville was the head, held a course direct and undeviating from beginning to end. Unfettered by those reservations in favour of Addington, which so long embarrassed the movements of their former leader, they at once started in opposition to the Peace and the Ministry, and, with not only Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, but the whole people of England, against them, persevered till they had ranged all these several parties on their side:—nor was it altogether without reason that this party afterwards boasted that, if any abandonment of principle had occurred in the connexion between them and the Whigs, the surrender was assuredly not from their side.

Early in the year 1804, on the death of Lord Elliot, the office of Receiver of the Duchy of Cornwall, which had been held by that nobleman, was bestowed by the Prince of Wales upon Mr. Sheridan, "as a trifling proof of that sincere friendship His Royal Highness had always professed and felt for him through a long series of years." His Royal Highness also added, in the same communication, the very cordial words, "I wish to God it was better worth your acceptance."

The following letter from Sheridan to Mr. Addington, communicating the intelligence of this appointment, shows pretty plainly the terms on which he not only now stood, but was well inclined to continue, with that Minister:—

"*George-Street, Tuesday evening.*

Dear Sir,

"Convinced as I am of the sincerity of your good will towards me, I do not regard it as an impertinent intrusion to inform you that the Prince has, in the most gracious manner, and wholly unsolicited, been pleased to appoint me to the late Lord Elliot's situation in the Duchy of Cornwall. I feel a desire to communicate this to you myself, because I feel a confidence that you will be glad of it. It has been my pride and pleasure to have exerted my humble efforts to serve the Prince without ever accepting the slightest obligation from him; but, in the present case, and under the present circumstances, I think it would have been really false pride and apparently mischievous affectation to have declined this mark of His Royal Highness's confidence and favour. I will not disguise that, at this peculiar crisis, I am greatly gratified at this event. Had it been the result of a mean and subservient devotion to the Prince's every wish and object, I could neither have respected the gift, the giver, or myself; but when I consider how recently it was my misfortune to find myself compelled by a sense of duty, stronger than my attachment to him, wholly to risk the situation I held in his confidence and favour, and that upon a subject[1] on which his feelings were so eager and irritable,

[1] The offer made by the Prince of his personal services in 1803,—on which occasion Sheridan coincided with the views of Mr. Addington somewhat more than was agreeable to His Royal Highness.

I cannot but regard the increased attention, with which he has since honoured me, as a most gratifying demonstration that he has clearness of judgment and firmness of spirit to distinguish the real friends to his true glory and interests, from the mean and mercenary sycophants, who fear and abhor that such friends should be near him. It is satisfactory to me, also, that this appointment gives me the title and opportunity of seeing the Prince, on trying occasions, openly and in the face of day, and puts aside the mask of mystery and concealment. I trust I need not add, that whatever small portion of fair influence I may at any time possess with the Prince, it shall be uniformly exerted to promote those feelings of duty and affection towards their Majesties, which, though seemingly interrupted by adverse circumstances, I am sure are in his heart warm and unalterable—and, as far as I may presume, that general concord throughout his illustrious family, which must be looked to by every honest subject as an essential part of the public strength at this momentous period. I have the honour to be, with great respect and esteem,

" Your obedient Servant,

" R. B. SHERIDAN."

" *Right Hon. Henry Addington.*"

The same views that influenced Mr. Sheridan, Lord Moira, and others, in supporting an Administration which, with all its defects, they considered preferable to a relapse into the hands of Mr. Pitt, had led Mr. Tierney, at the close of the last Session, to confer upon it a still more efficient sanction, by enrolling himself in its ranks as Treasurer of the Navy. In the early part of the present year, another ornament of the Whig party, Mr. Erskine, was on the point of following in the same footsteps, by accepting, from Mr. Addington, the office of Attorney-General. He had, indeed, proceeded so far in his intention as to submit the overtures of the Minister to the consideration of the Prince, in a letter which was transmitted to His Royal Highness by Sheridan. The answer of the Prince, conveyed also through Sheridan, while it expressed the most friendly feelings towards Erskine, declined, at the same time, giving any opinion as to either his acceptance or refusal of the office of Attorney-General, if offered to him under the present circumstances. His Royal Highness also added the expression of his sincere regret, that a proposal of this nature should have been submitted to his consideration by one, of whose attachment and fidelity to himself he was well convinced, but who ought to have felt, from the line of conduct adopted and persevered in by His Royal Highness, that he was the very last person that should have been applied to for either his opinion or countenance respecting the political conduct or connexions of any public character,—especially of one so intimately connected with him, and belonging to his family.

If, at any time, Sheridan had entertained the idea of associating

himself, by office, with the Ministry of Mr. Addington (and proposals to this effect were, it is certain, made to him), his knowledge of the existence of such feelings as prompted this answer to Mr. Erskine would, of course, have been sufficient to divert him from the intention.

The following document, which I have found, in his own handwriting, and which was intended, apparently, for publication in the newspapers, contains some particulars with respect to the proceedings of his party at this time, which, coming from such a source, may be considered as authentic :—

"STATE OF PARTIES.

"Among the various rumours of Coalitions, or attempted Coalitions, we have already expressed our disbelief in that reported to have taken place between the Grenville-Windhamites and Mr. Fox. At least, if it was ever in negotiation, we have reason to think it received an early check, arising from a strong party of the *Old Opposition* protesting against it. The account of this transaction, as whispered in the political circles, is as follows :—

"In consequence of some of the most respectable members of the Old Opposition being sounded on the subject, a meeting was held at Norfolk-House; when it was determined, with very few dissentient voices, to present a friendly remonstrance on the subject to Mr. Fox, stating the manifold reasons which obviously presented themselves against such a procedure, both as affecting Character and Party. It was urged that the present Ministers had, on the score of innovation on the Constitution, given the Whigs no pretence for complaint whatever; and, as to their alleged incapacity, it remained to be proved that they were capable of committing errors and producing miscarriages, equal to those which had marked the councils of their predecessors, whom the measure in question was expressly calculated to replace in power. At such a momentous crisis, therefore, waving all considerations of past political provocation, to attempt, by the strength and combination of party, to expel the Ministers of His Majesty's choice, and to force into his closet those whom the Whigs ought to be the first to rejoice that he had excluded from it, was stated to be a proceeding which would assuredly revolt the public feeling, degrade the character of Parliament, and produce possibly incalculable mischief to the country.

"We understand that Mr. Fox's reply was, that he would never take any Political step against the wishes and advice of the majority of his old friends.

"The paper is said to have been drawn up by Mr. Erskine, and to have been presented to Mr. Fox by His Grace of Norfolk, on the day His Majesty was pronounced to be recovered from his first illness. Rumour places among the supporters of this measure the written authority of the Duke of Northumberland and the Earl of Moira, with the signatures of Messrs. Erskine, Sheridan, Shum, Curwen, Western, Brogden, and a long *et cætera*. It is said also that the Prince's sanction had been previously given to the Duke,—His Royal Highness deprecating all Party-

struggle, at a moment when the defence of all that is dear to Britons ought to be the single sentiment that should fill the public mind.

"We do not vouch for the above being strictly accurate; but we are confident that it is not far from the truth."

The illness of the King, referred to in this paper, had been first publicly announced in the month of February, and was for some time considered of so serious a nature, that arrangements were actually in progress for the establishment of a Regency. Mr. Sheridan, who now formed a sort of connecting link between Carlton-House and the Minister, took, of course, a leading part in the negociations preparatory to such a measure. It appears, from a letter of Mr. Fox on the subject, that the Prince and another person, whom it is unnecessary to name, were at one moment not a little alarmed by a rumour of an intention to associate the Duke of York and the Queen in the Regency. Mr. Fox, however, begs of Sheridan to tranquillize their minds on this point:—the intentions (he adds) of "the Doctor[1]," though bad enough in all reason, do not go to such lengths; and a proposal of this nature, from any other quarter, could be easily defeated.

Within about two months from the date of the Remonstrance, which, according to a statement already given, was presented to Mr. Fox by his brother Whigs, one of the consequences which it prognosticated from the connexion of their party with the Grenvilles took place, in the resignation of Mr. Addington and the return of Mr. Pitt to power.

The confidence of Mr. Pitt, in thus taking upon himself, almost single-handed, the government of the country at such an awful crisis, was, he soon perceived, not shared by the public. A general expectation had prevailed that the three great Parties, which had lately been encamped together on the field of Opposition, would have each sent its Chiefs into the public councils, and thus formed such a Congress of power and talent as the difficulties of the empire, in that trying moment, demanded. This hope had been frustrated by the repugnance of the King to Mr. Fox, and the too ready facility with which Mr. Pitt had given way to it. Not only, indeed, in his undignified eagerness for office, did he sacrifice without stipu-

[1] To the infliction of this nickname on his friend, Mr. Addington, Sheridan was, in no small degree, accessory, by applying to those who disapproved of his administration, and yet gave no reasons for their disapprobation, the well-known lines,—

"I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,
And why, I cannot tell;
But this I know full well,
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell."

lation the important question which, but two years before, had been made the *sine qua non* of his services, but, in yielding so readily to the Royal prejudices against his rival, he gave a sanction to that unconstitutional principle of exclusion [1], which, if thus acted upon by the party-feelings of the Monarch, would soon narrow the Throne into the mere nucleus of a favoured faction. In allowing, too, his friends and partisans to throw the whole blame of this exclusive Ministry on the King, he but repeated the indecorum of which he had been guilty in 1802. For having at that time made use of the religious prejudices of the Monarch as a pretext for his manner of quitting office, he now employed the political prejudices of the same personage, as an equally convenient excuse for his manner of returning to it.

A few extracts from the speech of Mr. Sheridan upon the Additional Force Bill,—the only occasion on which he seems to have spoken during the present year,—will show that the rarity of his displays was not owing to any failure of power, but rather, perhaps, to the increasing involvement of his circumstances, which left no time for the thought and preparation that all his public efforts required.

Mr. Pitt had, at the commencement of this year, condescended to call to his aid the co-operation of Mr. Addington, Lord Buckinghamshire, and other members of that Administration which had withered away, but a few months before, under the blight of his sarcasm and scorn. In alluding to this Coalition, Sheridan says,—

"The Right Honourable Gentleman went into office alone;—but, lest the government should become too full of vigour from his support, he thought proper to beckon back some of the weakness of the former administration. He, I suppose, thought that the Ministry became, from his support, like spirits above proof, and required to be diluted; that, like gold refined to a certain degree, it would be unfit for use without a certain mixture of alloy; that the administration would be too brilliant, and dazzle the House, unless he called back a certain part of the mist and fog of the last administration to render it tolerable to the eye.

[1] "This principle of personal exclusion (said Lord Grenville) is one of which I never can approve, because, independently of its operation to prevent Parliament and the people from enjoying the Administration they desired, and which it was their particular interest to have, it tends to establish a dangerous precedent, that would afford too much opportunity of private pique against the public interest. I, for one, therefore, refused to connect myself with any one argument that should sanction that principle; and, in my opinion, every man who accepted office under that Administration is, according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, responsible for its character and construction, and the principle upon which it is founded."

Speech of Lord Grenville on the motion of Lord Darnley for the repeal of the Additional Force Bill, Feb. 15, 1805.

As to the great change made in the Ministry by the introduction of the Right Honourable Gentleman himself, I would ask, does he imagine that he came back to office with the same estimation that he left it? I am sure he is much mistaken if he fancies that he did. The Right Honourable Gentleman retired from office because, as was stated, he could not carry an important question, which he deemed necessary to satisfy the just claims of the Catholics; and in going out he did not hesitate to tear off the sacred veil of Majesty, describing his Sovereign as the only person that stood in the way of this desirable object. After the Right Honourable Gentleman's retirement, he advised the Catholics to look to no one but him for the attainment of their rights, and cautiously to abstain from forming a connection with any other person. But how does it appear, now that the Right Honourable Gentleman is returned to office? He declines to perform his promise; and has received, as his colleagues in office, those who are pledged to resist the measure. Does not the Right Honourable Gentleman then feel that he comes back to office with a character degraded by the violation of a solemn pledge, given to a great and respectable body of the people, upon a particular and momentous occasion? Does the Right Honourable Gentleman imagine either that he returns to office with the same character for political wisdom, after the description which he gave of the talents and capacity of his predecessors, and after having shown, by his own actions, that his description was totally unfounded?"

In alluding to Lord Melville's appointment to the Admiralty, he says,—

"But then, I am told, there is the First Lord of the Admiralty,—'Do you forget the leader of the grand Catamaran project? Are you not aware of the important change in that department, and the advantage the country is likely to derive from that change?' Why, I answer, that I do not know of any peculiar qualifications the Noble Lord has to preside over the Admiralty; but I do know, that if I were to judge of him from the kind of capacity he evinced while Minister of War, I should entertain little hopes of him. If, however, the Right Honourable Gentleman should say to me, 'Where else would you put that Noble Lord, would you have him appointed War-Minister again?' I should say, Oh no, by no means,—I remember too well the expeditions to Toulon, to Quiberon, to Corsica, and to Holland, the responsibility for each of which the Noble Lord took on himself, entirely releasing from any responsibility the Commander in Chief and the Secretary at War. I also remember that which, although so glorious to our arms in the result, I still shall call a most unwarrantable project,—the expedition to Egypt. It may be said, that as the Noble Lord was so unfit for the military department, the naval was the proper place for him. Perhaps there were people who would adopt this whimsical reasoning. I remember a story told respecting Mr. Garrick, who was once applied to by an eccentric Scotchman, to introduce a production of his on the stage. This Scotchman was such a good-humoured fellow, that he was called 'Honest Johnny M'Cree.' Johnny wrote four acts of a tragedy, which he showed to

Mr. Garrick, who dissuaded him from finishing it; telling him that his talent did not lie that way; so Johnny abandoned the tragedy, and set about writing a comedy. When this was finished, he showed it to Mr. Garrick, who found it to be still more exceptionable than the tragedy, and of course could not be persuaded to bring it forward on the stage. This surprised poor Johnny, and he remonstrated. 'Nay, now, David (said Johnny), did you not tell me that my talents did not lie in tragedy?'—'Yes (replied Garrick), but I did not tell you that they lay in comedy.'—'Then (exclaimed Johnny), gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon?' Unless the Noble Lord at the head of the Admiralty has the same reasoning in his mind as Johnny M'Cree, he cannot possibly suppose that his incapacity for the direction of the War-department necessarily qualifies him for the Presidency of the Naval. Perhaps, if the Noble Lord be told that he has no talents for the latter, his Lordship may exclaim with honest Johnny M'Cree, 'Gin they dinna lie there, where the de'il dittha lie, mon?'"

On the 10th of May, the claims of the Roman Catholics of Ireland were, for the first time, brought under the notice of the Imperial Parliament, by Lord Grenville in the House of Lords, and by Mr. Fox in the House of Commons. A few days before the debate, as appears by the following remarkable letter, Mr. Sheridan was made the medium of a communication from Carlton-House, the object of which was to prevent Mr. Fox from presenting the Petition.

DEAR SHERIDAN,

"I did not receive your letter till last night.

"I did, on Thursday, consent to be the presenter of the Catholic Petition, at the request of the Delegates, and had further conversation on the subject with them at Lord Grenville's yesterday morning. Lord Grenville also consented to present the Petition to the House of Lords.—Now, therefore, any discussion on *this* part of the subject would be too late; but I will fairly own, that, if it were not, I could not be dissuaded from doing the public act, which, of all others, it will give me the greatest satisfaction and pride to perform. No past event in my political life ever did, and no future one ever can, give me such pleasure.

"I am sure you know how painful it would be to me to disobey any command of His Royal Highness's, or even to act in any manner that might be in the slightest degree contrary to his wishes, and, therefore, I am not sorry that your intimation came too late.—I shall endeavour to see the Prince to-day; but, if I should fail, pray, take care that he knows how things stand before we meet at dinner, lest any conversation there should appear to come upon him by surprise.

"Yours ever,

"*Arlington-Street, Sunday.* "C. J. F."

It would be rash, without some further insight into the circum-

stances of this singular interference, to enter into any speculations with respect to its nature or motives, or to pronounce how far Mr. Sheridan was justified in being the instrument of it. But on the share of Mr. Fox in the transaction, such suspension of opinion is unnecessary. We have here his simple and honest words before us, —and they breathe a spirit of sincerity from which even Princes might take a lesson with advantage.

Mr. Pitt was not long in discovering that Place does not always imply Power, and that, in separating himself from the other able men of the day, he had but created an Opposition as much too strong for the Government, as the government itself was too weak for the country. The humiliating resource to which he was driven, in trying, as a tonic, the reluctant alliance of Lord Sidmouth,—the abortiveness of his effort to avert the fall of his old friend, Lord Melville, and the fatality of ill-luck that still attended his exertions against France,—all concurred to render this reign of the once powerful Minister a series of humiliations, shifts, and disasters, unlike his former proud period in every thing, but ill success. The powerful Coalition opposed to him already had a prospect of carrying by storm the post which he occupied, when, by his death, it was surrendered, without parley, into their hands.

The Administration that succeeded, under the auspices of Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, bore a resemblance to the celebrated Brass of Corinth, more, perhaps, in the variety of the metals brought together, than in the perfection of the compound that resulted from their fusion [1]. There were comprised in it, indeed, not only the two great parties of the leading chiefs, but those Whigs who differed with them both under the Addington Ministry, and the Addingtons that differed with them all on the subject of the Catholic claims. With this last anomalous addition to the miscellany the influence of Sheridan is mainly chargeable. Having, for some time past, exerted all his powers of management to bring about a coalition between Carlton-House and Lord Sidmouth, he had been at length so successful, that, upon the formation of the present Ministry, it was the express desire of the Prince that Lord Sidmouth should constitute a part of it. To the same unlucky influence, too, is to be traced the very questionable measure (notwithstanding the great learning and ability with which it was defended) of introducing the Chief Justice, Lord Ellenborough, into the Cabinet.

As to Sheridan's own share in the arrangements, it was, no

[1] See in the Annual Register of 1806 some able remarks upon Coalitions in general, as well as a temperate defence of this Coalition in particular,—for which that work is, I suspect, indebted to a hand such as has not often, since the time of Burke, enriched its pages.

doubt, expected by him that he should now be included among the members of the Cabinet; and it is probable that Mr. Fox, at the head of a purely Whig ministry, would have so far considered the services of his ancient ally, and the popularity still attached to his name through the country, as to confer upon him this mark of distinction and confidence. But there were other interests to be consulted;—and the undisguised earnestness with which Sheridan had opposed the union of his party with the Grenvilles, left him but little supererogation of services to expect in that quarter. Some of his nearest friends, and particularly Mrs. Sheridan, entreated, as I understand, in the most anxious manner, that he would not accept any such office as that of Treasurer of the Navy, for the responsibility and business of which they knew his habits so wholly unfitted him,—but that, if excluded by his colleagues from the distinction of a seat in the Cabinet, he should decline all office whatsoever, and take his chance in a friendly independence of them. But the time was now past when he could afford to adopt this policy,—the emoluments of a place were too necessary to him to be rejected;—and, in accepting the same office that had been allotted to him in the Regency arrangements of 1789, he must have felt, with no small degree of mortification, how stationary all his efforts, since then, had left him, and what a blank was thus made of all his services in the interval.

The period of this Ministry, connected with the name of Mr. Fox, though brief, and, in some respects, far from laudable, was distinguished by two measures,—the Plan of Limited Service, and the Resolution for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade,—which will long be remembered to the honour of those concerned in them. The motion of Mr. Fox against the Slave-Trade was the last he ever made in Parliament;—and the same sort of melancholy admiration that Pliny expresses, in speaking of a beautiful picture, the painter of which had died in finishing it,—"*dolor manus, dum id ageret, abreptæ*,"—comes naturally over our hearts in thinking of the last, glorious work, to which this illustrious statesman, in dying, set his hand.

Though it is not true, as has been asserted, that Mr. Fox refused to see Sheridan in his last illness, it is but too certain that those appearances of alienation or reserve, which had been for some time past observable in the former, continued to throw a restraint over their intercourse with each other to the last. It is a proof, however, of the absence of any serious grounds for this distrust, that Sheridan was the person selected by the relatives of Mr. Fox to preside over and direct the arrangements of the funeral, and that he put the last,

solemn seal to their long intimacy, by following his friend, as mourner, to the grave.

The honour of representing the city of Westminster in Parliament had been, for some time, one of the dreams of Sheridan's ambition. It was suspected, indeed,—I know not with what justice,—that in advising Mr. Fox, as he is said to have done, about the year 1800, to secede from public life altogether, he was actuated by a wish to succeed him in the representation of Westminster, and had even already set on foot some private negotiations towards that object. Whatever grounds there may have been for this suspicion, the strong wish that he felt on the subject had long been sufficiently known to his colleagues; and, on the death of Mr. Fox, it appeared, not only to himself, but the public, that he was the person naturally pointed out as most fit to be his parliamentary successor. It was, therefore, with no slight degree of disappointment he discovered, that the ascendancy of Aristocratic influence was, as usual, to prevail, and that the young son of the Duke of Northumberland would be supported by the Government in preference to him. It is but right, however, in justice to the Ministry, to state, that the neglect with which they appear to have treated him on this occasion,—particularly in not apprising him of their decision in favour of Lord Percy, sufficiently early to save him from the humiliation of a fruitless attempt,—is proved, by the following letters, to have originated in a double misapprehension, by which, while Sheridan, on one side, was led to believe that the Ministers would favour his pretensions, the Ministers, on the other, were induced to think that he had given up all intentions of being a candidate.

The first letter is addressed to the gentleman (one of Sheridan's intimate friends) who seems to have been, unintentionally, the cause of the mistake on both sides.

"Dear——, *Somerset-Place, September* 14.

"You must have seen by my manner, yesterday, how much I was surprised and hurt at learning, for the first time, that Lord Grenville had, many days previous to Mr. Fox's death, decided to support Lord Percy on the expected vacancy for Westminster, and that you had since been the active agent in the canvass actually commenced. I do not like to think I have grounds to complain or change my opinion of any friend, without being very explicit, and opening my mind, without reserve, on such a subject. I must frankly declare, that I think you have brought yourself and me into a very unpleasant dilemma. You seemed to say, last night, that you had not been apprised of my intention to offer for Westminster on the apprehended vacancy. I am confident you have acted under that impression; but I must impute to you either great inattention to what fell from me in our last conversation on the subject, or great inaccuracy of recollection; for I solemnly protest I considered

you as the individual most distinctly apprised, that at this moment to succeed that great man and revered friend in Westminster, should the fatal event take place, would be the highest object of my ambition;—for, in that conversation I thanked you expressly for informing me that Lord Grenville had said to yourself, upon Lord Percy being suggested to him, that he, Lord Grenville, '*would decide on nothing until Mr. Sheridan had been spoken to, and his intentions known,*' or words precisely to that effect. I expressed my grateful sense of Lord Grenville's attention, and said, that it would confirm me in my intention of making no application, however hopeless myself respecting Mr. Fox, while life remained with him,—and these words of Lord Grenville you allowed last night to have been so stated to me, though not as a message from his Lordship. Since that time I think we have not happened to meet; at least, sure I am, we have had no conversation on the subject. Having the highest opinion of Lord Grenville's honour and sincerity, I must be confident that he must have had another impression made on his mind respecting my wishes before I was entirely passed by. I do not mean to say that my offering myself was immediately to entitle me to the support of Government; but I do mean to say, that my pretensions were entitled to consideration, before that support was offered to another without the slightest notice taken of me,—the more especially as the words of Lord Grenville, reported by you to me, had been stated by me to many friends as my reliance and justification in not following their advice by making a direct application to Government. I pledged myself to them that Lord Grenville would not promise the support of Government till my intentions had been asked, and I quoted your authority for doing so: I never heard a syllable of that support being promised to Lord Percy until from you on the evening of Mr. Fox's death. Did I ever authorise you to inform Lord Grenville that I had abandoned the idea of offering myself? These are points which it is necessary, for the honour of all parties, should be amicably explained. I therefore propose, as the shortest way of effecting it,—wishing you not to consider this letter as in any degree confidential, —that my statements in this letter may be submitted to any two common friends, or to the Lord Chancellor alone, and let it be ascertained where the error has arisen, for error is all I complain of; and, with regard to Lord Grenville, I desire distinctly to say, that I feel myself indebted for the fairness and kindness of his intentions towards me. My disappointment of the protection of Government may be a sufficient excuse to the friends I am pledged to, should I retire; but I must have it understood whether or not I deceived them, when I led them, to expect that I should have that support.

"I hope to remain'

"Ever yours sincerely,

"R. B. Sheridan.

"The sooner the reference I propose the better."

The second letter, which is still further explanatory of the misconception, was addressed by Sheridan to Lord Grenville:

"My dear Lord,

"Since I had the honour of Your Lordship's letter, I have received one

from Mr.——, in which, I am sorry to observe, he is silent as to my offer of meeting, in the presence of a third person, in order to ascertain whether *he* did or not so report a conversation with your Lordship as to impress on my mind a belief that my pretensions would be considered, before the support of Government should be pledged elsewhere. Instead of this, he not only does not admit the *precise words* quoted by me, but does not state what he allows he did say. If he denies that he ever gave me reason to adopt the belief I have stated, be it so; but the only stipulation I have made is that we should come to an explicit understanding on this subject,—not with a view to quoting words or repeating names, but that the misapprehension, whatever it was, may be so admitted as not to leave me under an unmerited degree of discredit and disgrace. Mr. —— certainly never encouraged me to stand for Westminster, but, on the contrary, advised me to support Lord Percy, which made me the more mark at the time the fairness with which I thought he apprised me of the preference my pretensions were likely to receive in your Lordship's consideration.

"Unquestionably your Lordship's recollection of what passed between Mr. —— and yourself must be just; and were it no more than what you said on the same subject to Lord Howick, I consider it as a mark of attention; but what has astonished me is, that Mr. —— should ever have informed your Lordship, as he admits he did, that I had no intention of offering myself. This naturally must have put from your mind whatever degree of disposition was there to have made a preferable application to me; and Lord Howick's answer to your question, on which I have ventured to make a friendly remonstrance, must have confirmed Mr.——'s report. But allow me to suppose that I had myself seen your Lordship, and that you had explicitly promised me the support of Government, and had afterwards sent for me and informed me that it was at all an object to you that I should give way to Lord Percy, I assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that I should cheerfully have withdrawn myself, and applied every interest I possessed as your Lordship should have directed.

"All I request is, that what passed between me and Mr.——may take an intelligible shape before any common friend, or before your Lordship. This I conceive to be a preliminary due to my own honour, and what he ought not to evade."

The Address which he delivered, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in declining the offer of support which many of the electors still pressed upon him, contains some of those touches of personal feeling which a biographer is more particularly bound to preserve. In speaking of Mr. Fox, he said,—

"It is true there have been occasions upon which I have differed with him—painful recollections of the most painful moments of my political life! Nor were there wanting those who endeavoured to represent these differences as a departure from the homage which his superior mind, though unclaimed by him, was entitled to, and from the allegiance of friendship which our hearts all swore to him. But never was the genuine

and confiding texture of his soul more manifest than on such occasions: he knew that nothing on earth could detach me from him; and he resented insinuations against the sincerity and integrity of a friend, which he would not have noticed had they been pointed against himself. With such a man to have battled in the cause of genuine liberty,—with such a man to have struggled against the inroads of oppression and corruption —with such an example before me, to have to boast that I never in my life gave one vote in Parliament that was not on the side of freedom, is the congratulation that attends the retrospect of my public life. His friendship was the pride and honour of my days. I never, for one moment, regretted to share with him the difficulties, the calumnies, and sometimes even the dangers, that attended an honourable course. And now, reviewing my past political life, were the option possible that I should retread the path, I solemnly and deliberately declare that I would prefer to pursue the same course; to bear up under the same pressure; to abide by the same principles; and remain by his side, an exile from power, distinction, and emolument, rather than be at this moment a splendid example of successful servility or prosperous apostacy, though clothed with power, honour, titles, gorged with sinecures, and lord of hoards obtained from the plunder of the people.

At the conclusion of his Address he thus alludes, with evidently a deep feeling of discontent, to the circumstances that had obliged him to decline the honour now proposed to him:—

"Illiberal warnings have been held out, most unauthoritatively I know, that by persevering in the present contest I may risk my official situation; and if I retire, I am aware that minds, as coarse and illiberal, may assign the dread of that as my motive. To such insinuations I shall scorn to make any other reply than a reference to the whole of my past political career. I consider it as no boast to say, that any one who has struggled through such a portion of life as I have, without obtaining an office, is not likely to abandon his principles to retain one when acquired. If riches do not give independence, the next best thing to being very rich is to have been used to be very poor. But independence is not allied to wealth, to birth, to rank, to power, to titles, or to honour. Independence is in the mind of a man, or it is no where. On this ground were I to decline the contest, I should scorn the imputation that should bring the purity of my purpose into doubt. No Minister can expect to find in me a servile vassal. No Minister can expect from me the abandonment of any principle I have avowed, or any pledge I have given. I know not that I have hitherto shrunk in place from opinions I have maintained while in opposition. Did there exist a Minister of a different cast from any I know in being, were he to attempt to exact from me a different conduct, my office should be at his service to-morrow. Such a Ministry might strip me of my situation, in some respects of considerable emolument, but he could not strip me of the proud conviction that I was right; he could not strip me of my own self-esteem; he could not strip me, I think, of some portion of the confidence and good opinion of the people. But I am noticing the calumnious threat I allude to more than it deserves. There can

be no peril, I venture to assert, under the present Government, in the free exercise of discretion, such as belongs to the present question. I therefore disclaim the merit of putting any thing to hazard. If I have missed the opportunity of obtaining all the support I might, perhaps, have had on the present occasion, from a very scrupulous delicacy, which I think became and was incumbent upon me, but which I by no means conceive to have been a fit rule for others, I cannot repent it. While the slightest aspiration of breath passed those lips, now closed for ever,—while one drop of life's blood beat in that heart, now cold for ever,—I could not, I ought not, to have acted otherwise than I did. I now come with a very embarrassed feeling to that declaration which I yet think you must have expected from me, but which I make with reluctance, because, from the marked approbation I have experienced from you, I fear that with reluctance you will receive it,—I feel myself under the necessity of retiring from this contest."

About three weeks after ensued the Dissolution of Parliament,—a measure attended with considerable unpopularity to the Ministry, and originating as much in the enmity of one of its members to Lord Sidmouth, as the introduction of that noble Lord among them at all was owing to the friendship of another. In consequence of this event, Lord Percy having declined offering himself again, Mr. Sheridan became a candidate for Westminster, and after a most riotous contest with a demagogue of the moment, named Paull, was, together with Sir Samuel Hood, declared duly elected.

The moderate measure in favour of the Roman Catholics, which the Ministry now thought it due to the expectations of that body to bring forward, was, as might be expected, taken advantage of by the King to rid himself of their counsels, and produced one of those bursts of bigotry by which the people of England have so often disgraced themselves. It is sometimes a misfortune to men of wit, that they put their opinions in a form to be remembered. We might, perhaps, have been ignorant of the keen, but worldly view which Mr. Sheridan, on this occasion, took of the hardihood of his colleagues, if he had not himself expressed it in a form so portable to the memory. "He had often," he said, "heard of people knocking out their brains against a wall, but never before knew of any one building a wall expressly for the purpose."

It must be owned, indeed, that though far too sagacious and liberal not to be deeply impressed with the justice of the claims advanced by the Catholics, he was not altogether disposed to go those generous lengths in their favour, of which Mr. Fox and a few others of their less calculating friends were capable. It was his avowed opinion, that, though the measure, whenever brought forward, should be supported and enforced by the whole weight of the party, they ought never so far to identify or encumber themselves with it,

as to make its adoption a *sine qua non* of their acceptance or retention of office. His support, too, of the Ministry of Mr. Addington, which was as virtually pledged against the Catholics as that which now succeeded to power, sufficiently shows the secondary station that this great question occupied in his mind; nor can such a deviation from the usual tone of his political feelings be otherwise accounted for, than by supposing that he was aware of the existence of a strong indisposition to the measure in that quarter, by whose views and wishes his public conduct was, in most cases, regulated.

On the general question, however, of the misgovernment of Ireland, and the disabilities of the Catholics, as forming its most prominent feature, his zeal was always forthcoming and ardent,—and never more so than during the present Session, when, on the question of the Irish Arms Bill, and his own motion upon the State of Ireland, he distinguished himself by an animation and vigour worthy of the best period of his eloquence.

Mr. Grattan, in supporting the coercive measures now adopted against his country, had shown himself, for once, alarmed into a concurrence with the wretched system of governing by Insurrection Acts, and, for once, lent his sanction to the principle upon which all such measures are founded, namely, that of enabling Power to defend itself against the consequences of its own tyranny and injustice. In alluding to some expressions used by this great man, Sheridan said:—

"He now happened to recollect what was said by a Right Honourable Gentleman, to whose opinions they all deferred (Mr. Grattan), that notwithstanding he voted for the present measure, with all its defects, rather than lose it altogether, yet that gentleman said, that he hoped to secure the reversionary interest of the Constitution to Ireland. But when we saw that the Constitution was suspended from the year 1796 to the present period, and that it was now likely to be continued for three years longer, the danger was that we might lose the interest altogether;—when we were mortgaged for such a length of time, at last a foreclosure might take place."

The following is an instance of that happy power of applying old stories, for which Mr. Windham, no less than Sheridan, was remarkable, and which, by promoting anecdote into the service of argument and wit, ennobles it, when trivial, and gives new youth to it, when old.

"When they and others complain of the discontents of the Irish, they never appear to consider the cause. When they express their surprise that the Irish are not contented, while, according to their observation, that people have so much reason to be happy, they betray a total ignorance of their actual circumstances. The fact is, that the tyranny practised upon

the Irish has been throughout unremitting. There has been no change but in the manner of inflicting it. They have had nothing but variety in oppression, extending to all ranks and degrees of a certain description of the people. If you would know what this varied oppression consisted in, I refer you to the Penal Statutes you have repealed, and to some of those which still exist. There you will see the high and the low equally subjected to the lash of persecution; and yet still some persons affect to be astonished at the discontents of the Irish. But with all my reluctance to introduce any thing ludicrous upon so serious an occasion, I cannot help referring to a little story which those very astonished persons call to my mind. It was with respect to an Irish drummer, who was employed to inflict punishment upon a soldier. When the boy struck high, the poor soldier exclaimed, 'Lower, bless you,' with which the boy complied. But soon after the soldier exclaimed, 'Higher, if you please.' But again he called out, 'A little lower;' upon which the accommodating boy addressed him—'Now, upon my conscience, I see you are a discontented man; for, strike where I may, there's no pleasing you.' Now your complaint of the discontents of the Irish appears to me quite as rational, while you continue to strike, only altering the place of attack."

Upon this speech, which may be considered as the *bouquet*, or last parting blaze of his eloquence, he appears to have bestowed considerable care and thought. The concluding sentences of the following passage, though in his very worst taste, were as anxiously laboured by him, and put through as many rehearsals on paper, as any of the most highly finished witticisms in The School for Scandal.

"I cannot think patiently of such petty squabbles, while Bonaparte is grasping the nations; while he is surrounding France, not with that iron frontier, for which the wish and childish ambition of Louis XIV. was so eager, but with kingdoms of his own creation; securing the gratitude of higher minds as the hostage, and the fears of others as pledges for his safety. His are no ordinary fortifications. His martello towers are Thrones; sceptres tipt with crowns are the palisadoes of his entrenchments, and Kings are his centinels."

The Reporter here, by "tipping" the sceptres "with crowns," has improved, rather unnecessarily, upon the finery of the original. The following are specimens of the various trials of this passage, which I find scribbled over detached scraps of paper:—

"Contrast the different attitudes and occupations of the two governments:—B. eighteen months from his capital,—head-quarters in the villages,—neither Berlin or Warsaw,—dethroning and creating thrones,—the works he raises are monarchies,—sceptres his palisadoes,—thrones his martello towers."

"Commissioning kings,—erecting thrones, martello towers,—Cambaceres count noses,—Austrians, fine dressed, like Pompey's troops."

"B. fences with sceptres,—his martello towers are thrones,—he alone is France."

Another Dissolution of Parliament having taken place this year, he again became a candidate for the city of Westminster. But, after a violent contest, during which he stood the coarse abuse of the mob with the utmost good humour and playfulness, the election ended in favour of Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Cochrane, and Sheridan was returned, with his friend Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor, for the borough of Ilchester.

In the autumn of 1807 he had conceived some idea of leasing the property of Drury-Lane Theatre, and, with that view, had set on foot, through Mr. Michael Kelly, who was then in Ireland, a negotiation with Mr. Frederick Jones, the proprietor of the Dublin Theatre. In explaining his object to Mr. Kelly, in a letter dated August 30, 1807, he describes it as a "plan by which the property may be leased to those who have the skill and the industry to manage it as it should be for their own advantage, upon terms which would render any risk to them almost impossible;—the profit to them (he adds) would probably be beyond what I could now venture to state, and yet upon terms which would be much better for the real proprietors than any thing that can arise from the careless and ignorant manner in which the undertaking is now misconducted by those who, my son excepted, have no interest in its success, and who lose nothing by its failure."

The negotiation with Mr. Jones was continued into the following year; and, according to a draft of agreement, which this gentleman has been kind enough to show me, in Sheridan's hand-writing, it was intended that Mr. Jones should, on becoming proprietor of one quarter-share of the property, "undertake the management of the Theatre in conjunction with Mr. T. Sheridan, and be entitled to the same remuneration, namely, 1000*l.* per annum certain income, and a certain per centage on the net profits arising from the office-receipts, as should be agreed upon," etc. etc.

The following memorandum of a bet, connected with this transaction, is of somewhat a higher class of wagers than the One Tun Tavern has often had the honour of recording among its archives[1]:—

"*One Tun, St. James's Market, May* 26, 1808.

"In the presence of Messrs. G. Ponsonby, R. Power, and Mr. Becher[1], Mr. Jones bets Mr. Sheridan five hundred guineas that he, Mr. Sheridan, does not write, and produce under his name, a play of five acts, or a

[1] It is not without a deep feeling of melancholy that I transcribe this paper. Of three of my most valued friends, whose names are signed to it,—Becher, Ponsonby, and Power,—the last has, within a few short months, been snatched away, leaving behind him the recollection of as many gentle and manly virtues as ever concurred to give sweetness and strength to character.

first piece of three, within the term of three years from the 15th of September next.—It is distinctly to be understood that this bet is not valid unless Mr. Jones becomes a partner in Drury-Lane Theatre before the commencement of the ensuing season.

"Richard Power. "R. B. Sheridan.
"George Ponsonby. "Fred. Edw. Jones.
"W. W. Becher.

"N. B. W. W. Becher and Richard Power join, one fifty, – the other one hundred pounds in this bet.

"R. Power."

The grand movement of Spain, in the year 1808, which led to consequences so important to the rest of Europe, though it has left herself as enslaved and priest-ridden as ever, was hailed by Sheridan with all that prompt and well-timed ardour, with which he alone, of all his party, knew how to meet such great occasions. Had his political associates but learned from his example thus to place themselves in advance of the procession of events, they would not have had the triumphal wheels pass by them, and over them, so frequently. Immediately on the arrival of the Deputies from Spain, he called the attention of the House to the affairs of that country; and his speech on the subject, though short and unstudied, had not only the merit of falling in with the popular feeling at the moment, but, from the views which it pointed out through the bright opening now made by Spain, was every way calculated to be useful both at home and abroad.

"Let Spain," he said, "see, that we were not inclined to stint the services we had it in our power to render her; that we were not actuated by the desire of any petty advantage to ourselves; but that our exertions were to be solely directed to the attainment of the grand and general object, the emancipation of the world. If the flame were once fairly caught, our success was certain. France would then find, that she had hitherto been contending only against principalities, powers, and authorities, but that she had now to contend against a people."

The death of Lord Lake this year removed those difficulties, which had, ever since the appointment of Sheridan to the Receivership of the Duchy of Cornwall, stood in the way of his reaping the full advantages of that office. Previously to the departure of General Lake for India, the Prince had granted to him the reversion of this situation, which was then filled by Lord Elliot. It was afterwards, however, discovered that, according to the terms of the Grant, the place could not be legally held or deputed by any one who had not been actually sworn into it before the Prince's Council. On the death of Lord Elliot, therefore, His Royal Highness thought himself authorised, as we have seen, in conferring the appointment

upon Mr. Sheridan. This step, however, was considered by the friends of General Lake as not only a breach of promise, but a violation of right; and it would seem, from one of the documents which I am about to give, that measures were even in train for enforcing the claim by law.

The first is a letter on the subject from Sheridan to Colonel M'Mahon :—

"My dear M'Mahon, *Thursday evening.*

"I have thoroughly considered and reconsidered the subject we talked upon to-day. Nothing on earth shall make me risk the possibility of the Prince's goodness to me furnishing an opportunity for a single scurrilous fool's presuming to hint even that he had, in the slightest manner, departed from the slightest engagement. The Prince's right, in point of law and justice, on the present occasion to recall the appointment given, I hold to be incontestible; but, believe me, I am right in the proposition I took the liberty of submitting to His Royal Highness, and which (so far is he from wishing to hurt General Lake,) he graciously approved. But understand me,—my meaning is to give up the emoluments of the situation to General Lake, holding the situation at the Prince's pleasure, and abiding by an arbitrated estimate of General Lake's claim, supposing His Royal Highness had appointed him; in other words, to value his interest in the appointment as *if he had it*, and to pay him for it or resign to him.

"With the Prince's permission I should be glad to meet Mr. Warwick Lake, and I am confident that no two men of common sense and good intentions can fail, in ten minutes, to arrange it so as to meet the Prince's wishes, and not to leave the shadow of a pretence for envious malignity to whisper a word against his decision.

"Yours ever,

"R. B. Sheridan."

"I write in great haste—going to A——."

The other Paper that I shall give, as throwing light on the transaction, is a rough and unfinished sketch by Sheridan of a statement intended to be transmitted to General Lake, containing the particulars of both Grants, and the documents connected with them :—

"Dear General,

"I am commanded by the Prince of Wales to transmit to you a correct Statement of a transaction in which your name is so much implicated, and in which his feelings have been greatly wounded from a quarter, I am commanded to say, whence he did not expect such conduct.

"As I am directed to communicate the particulars in the most authentic form, you will, I am sure, excuse on this occasion my not adopting the mode of a familiar letter.

"Authentic Statement respecting the Appointment by His Royal

Highness the Prince of Wales to the Receivership of the Duchy of Cornwall, in the Year 1804, to be transmitted by His Royal Highness's Command to Lieutenant-General Lake, Commander-in-chief of the Forces in India.

"The circumstances attending the original reversionary Grant to General Lake are stated in the brief for Counsel on this occasion by Mr. Bignel, the Prince's solicitor, to be as follow: (No. I.) It was afterwards understood by the Prince that the service he had wished to render General Lake, by this Grant, had been defeated by the terms of it; and so clearly had it been shown that there were essential duties attached to the office, which no Deputy was competent to execute, and that a Deputy, even for the collection of the rents, could not be appointed but by a principal actually in possession of the office, (by having been sworn into it before his Council,) that upon General Lake's appointment to the Command in India, the Prince could have no conception that General Lake could have left the country under an impression or expectation that the Prince would appoint him, in case of a vacancy, to the place in question. Accordingly, His Royal Highness, on the very day he heard of the death of Lord Elliot, unsolicited, and of his own gracious suggestion, appointed Mr. Sheridan. Mr. Sheridan returned, the next day, in a letter to the Prince, such an answer and acknowledgment as might be expected from him; and, accordingly, directions were given to make out his patent. On the ensuing ——— His Royal Highness was greatly surprised at receiving the following letter from Mr. Warwick Lake. (No. II.)

"His Royal Highness immediately directed Mr. Sheridan to see Mr. W. Lake, and to state his situation, and how the office was circumstanced; and for further distinctness to make a minute in writing." * * * *

Such were the circumstances that had, at first, embarrassed his enjoyment of this office; but, on the death of Lord Lake, all difficulties were removed, and the appointment was confirmed to Sheridan for his life.

In order to afford some insight into the nature of that friendship which existed so long between the Heir Apparent and Sheridan, —though unable, of course, to produce any of the numerous letters, on the Royal side of the correspondence, that have been found among the papers in my possession,—I shall here give, from a rough copy in Sheridan's hand-writing, a letter which he addressed about this time to the Prince :—

"It is matter of surprise to myself, as well as of deep regret, that I should have incurred the appearance of ungrateful neglect and disrespect towards the person to whom I am most obliged on earth, to whom I feel the most ardent, dutiful, and affectionate attachment, and in whose service I would readily sacrifice my life. Yet so it is, and to nothing but a perverse combination of circumstances, which would form no excuse were I to recapitulate them, can I attribute a conduct so strange on my

part; and from nothing but Your Royal Highness's kindness and benignity alone can I expect an indulgent allowance and oblivion of that conduct: nor could I even hope for this were I not conscious of the unabated and unalterable devotion towards Your Royal Highness which lives in my heart, and will ever continue to be its pride and boast.

"But I should ill deserve the indulgence I request did I not frankly state what has passed in my mind, which, though it cannot justify, may, in some degree, extenuate what must have appeared so strange to Your Royal Highness, previous to Your Royal Highness having actually restored me to the office I had resigned.

"I was mortified and hurt in the keenest manner by having repeated to me from an authority which *I then trusted*, some expressions of Your Royal Highness respecting me, which it was impossible I could have deserved. Though I was most solemnly pledged never to reveal the source from which the communication came, I for some time intended to unburthen my mind to my sincere friend and Your Royal Highness's most attached and excellent servant, M'Mahon—but I suddenly discovered, beyond a doubt, that I had been grossly deceived, and that there had not existed the slightest foundation for the tale that had been imposed on me; and I do humbly ask Your Royal Highness's pardon for having for a moment credited a fiction suggested by mischief and malice. Yet, extraordinary as it must seem, I had so long, under this false impression, neglected the course which duty and gratitude required from me, that I felt an unaccountable shyness and reserve in repairing my error, and to this procrastination other unlucky circumstances contributed. One day when I had the honour of meeting Your Royal Highness on horseback in Oxford-Street, though your manner was as usual gracious and kind to me, you said that I had deserted you privately and *politically*. I had long before that been assured, though falsely I am convinced, that Your Royal Highness had promised to make a point that I should neither speak nor vote on Lord Wellesley's business. My view of this topic, and my knowledge of the delicate situation in which Your Royal Highness stood in respect to the Catholic question, though weak and inadequate motives I confess, yet encouraged the continuance of that reserve which my original error had commenced. These subjects being passed by,—and sure I am Your Royal Highness would never deliberately ask me to adopt a course of debasing inconsistency,—it was my hope fully and frankly to have explained myself and repaired my fault, when I was informed that a circumstance that happened at Burlington-House, and which must have been heinously misrepresented, had greatly offended you; and soon after it was stated to me, by an authority which I have no objection to disclose, that Your Royal Highness had quoted, with marked disapprobation, words supposed to have been spoken by me on the Spanish question, and of which words, as there is a God in heaven, I never uttered one syllable.

"Most justly may Your Royal Highness answer to all this, why have I not sooner stated these circumstances, and confided in that uniform friendship and protection which I have so long experienced at your hands. I can only plead a nervous, procrastinating nature, abetted, perhaps, by sensations of, I trust, no false pride, which, however I may

blame myself, impel me involuntarily to fly from the risk of even a cold look from the quarter to which I owe so much, and by whom to be esteemed is the glory and consolation of my private and public life.

"One point only remains for me to intrude upon Your Royal Highness's consideration, but it is of a nature fit only for personal communication. I therefore conclude, with again entreating Your Royal Highness to continue and extend the indulgence which the imperfections in my character have so often received from you, and yet to be assured that there never did exist to Monarch, Prince, or man, a firmer or purer attachment than I feel, and to my death shall feel, to you, my gracious Prince and Master."

CHAPTER XX.

Destruction of the Theatre of Drury-Lane by fire. — Mr. Whitbread. — Plan for a third Theatre. — Illness of the King. — Regency. — Lord Grey and Lord Grenville.—Conduct of Mr. Sheridan.—His vindication of himself.

With the details of the embarrassments of Drury-Lane Theatre, I have endeavoured, as little as possible, to encumber the attention of the reader. This part of my subject would, indeed, require a volume to itself. The successive partnerships entered into with Mr. Grubb and Mr. Richardson,—the different Trust-deeds for the general and individual property,—the various creations of Shares,—the controversies between the Trustees and Proprietors as to the obligations of the Deed of 1793, which ended in a Chancery-suit in 1799,—the perpetual entanglements of the property, which Sheridan's private debts occasioned, and which even the friendship and skill of Mr. Adam were wearied out in endeavouring to rectify,—all this would lead to such a mass of details and correspondence as, though I have waded through it myself, it is by no means necessary to inflict upon others.

The great source of the involvements, both of Sheridan himself and of the concern, is to be found in the enormous excess of the expense of rebuilding the Theatre in 1793, over the amount stated by the architect in his estimate. This amount was 75,000*l.*; and the sum of 150,000*l.*, then raised by subscription, would, it was calculated, in addition to defraying this charge, pay off also the mortgage-debts with which the Theatre was encumbered. It was soon found, however, that the expense of building the House alone would exceed the whole amount raised by subscription; and notwithstanding the advance of a considerable sum beyond the estimate, the Theatre was delivered in a very unfinished state into the hands of the proprietors,—only part of the mortgage-debts was paid off, and, altogether, a debt of 70,000*l.* was left upon the property.

This debt Mr. Sheridan and the other proprietors took, voluntarily, and, as it has been thought, inconsiderately, upon themselves,—the builders, by their contracts, having no legal claim upon them,—and the payment of it being at various times enforced, not only against the theatre, but against the private property of Mr. Sheridan, involved both in a degree of embarrassment from which there appeared no hope of extricating them.

Such was the state of this luckless property,—and it would have been difficult to imagine any change for the worse that could befall it,—when, early in the present year, an event occurred, that seemed to fill up at once the measure of its ruin. On the night of the 24th of February, while the House of Commons was occupied with Mr. Ponsonby's motion on the Conduct of the War in Spain, and Mr. Sheridan was in attendance, with the intention, no doubt, of speaking, the House was suddenly illuminated by a blaze of light; and, the Debate being interrupted, it was ascertained that the Theatre of Drury-Lane was on fire. A motion was made to adjourn; but Mr. Sheridan said, with much calmness, that "whatever might be the extent of the private calamity, he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country." He then left the House; and, proceeding to Drury-Lane, witnessed, with a fortitude which strongly interested all who observed him, the entire destruction of his property [1].

Among his losses on the occasion there was one which, from being associated with feelings of other times, may have affected him, perhaps, more deeply than many that were far more serious. A harpsichord, that had belonged to his first wife, and had long survived her sweet voice in silent widowhood, was, with other articles of furniture that had been moved from Somerset-House to the Theatre, lost in the flames.

The ruin thus brought upon this immense property seemed, for a time, beyond all hope of retrieval. The embarrassments of the concern were known to have been so great, and such a swarm of litigious claims lay slumbering under those ashes, that it is not surprising the public should have been slow and unwilling to touch them. Nothing, indeed, short of the intrepid zeal of Mr. Whitbread could have ventured upon the task of remedying so complex a cala-

[1] It is said that, as he sat at the Piazza Coffee-house, during the fire, taking some refreshment, a friend of his having remarked on the philosophic calmness with which he bore his misfortune, Sheridan answered, "A man may surely be allowed to take a glass of wine *by his own fire-side.*"

Without vouching for the authenticity or novelty of this anecdote, (which may have been, for aught I know, like the wandering Jew, a regular attendant upon all fires since the time of Hierocles,) I give it as I heard it.

mity; nor could any industry less persevering have compassed the miracle of rebuilding and re-animating that edifice, among the many-tongued claims that beset and perplexed his enterprise.

In the following interesting letter to him from Sheridan, we trace the first steps of his friendly interference on the occasion :—

"My dear Whitbread,

"Procrastination is always the consequence of an indolent man's resolving to write a long detailed letter, upon any subject, however important to himself, or whatever may be the confidence he has in the friend he proposes to write to. To this must be attributed your having escaped the statement I threatened you with in my last letter, and the brevity with which I now propose to call your attention to the serious, and to me, most important request, contained in this,—reserving all I meant to have written for personal communication.

"I pay you no compliment when I say that, without comparison, you are the man living, in my estimation, the most disposed and the most competent to bestow a portion of your time and ability to assist the call of friendship,—on the condition that that call shall be proved to be made in a cause just and honourable, and in every respect entitled to your protection.

"On this ground alone I make my application to you. You said, some time since, in my house, but in a careless conversation only, that you would be a Member of a Committee for rebuilding Drury-Lane Theatre, if it would serve me; and, indeed, you very kindly suggested, yourself, that there were more persons disposed to assist that object than I might be aware of. I most thankfully accept the offer of your interference, and am convinced of the benefits your friendly exertions are competent to produce. I have worked the whole subject in my own mind, and see a clear way to retrieve a great property, at least to my son and his family, if my plan meets the support I hope it will appear to merit.

"Writing thus to you in the sincerity of private friendship, and the reliance I place on my opinion of your character, I need not ask of you, though eager and active in politics as you are, not to be severe in criticising my palpable neglect of all parliamentary duty. It would not be easy to explain to you, or even to make you comprehend, or any one in prosperous and affluent plight, the private difficulties I have to struggle with. My mind, and the resolute independence belonging to it, has not been in the least subdued by the late calamity; but the consequences arising from it have more engaged and embarrassed me than, perhaps, I have been willing to allow. It has been a principle of my life, persevered in through great difficulties, never to borrow money of a private friend: and this resolution I would starve rather than violate. Of course, I except the political aid of election-subscription. When I ask you to take a part in the settlement of my shattered affairs, I ask you only to do so after a previous investigation of every part of the past circumstances which relate to the trust I wish you to accept, in conjunction with those who wish to serve me, and to whom I think you could not object. I may be again seized with an illness as alarming as that I lately experienced.

Assist me in relieving my mind from the greatest affliction that such a situation can again produce,—the fear of others suffering by my death.

"To effect this little more is necessary than some resolution on my part and the active superintending advice of a mind like yours.

"Thus far on paper: I will see you next——, and therefore will not trouble you for a written reply."

Encouraged by the opening which the destruction of Drury-Lane seemed to offer to free adventure in theatrical property, a project was set on foot for the establishment of a Third Great Theatre, which, being backed by much of the influence and wealth of the city of London, for some time threatened destruction to the monopoly that had existed so long. But, by the exertions of Mr. Sheridan and his friends, this scheme was defeated, and a Bill for the erection of Drury-Lane Theatre by subscription, and for the incorporation of the subscribers, was passed through Parliament.

That Mr. Sheridan himself would have had no objection to a Third Theatre, if held by a Joint Grant to the Proprietors of the other two, appears not only from his speeches and petitions on the subject at this time, but from the following Plan for such an establishment, drawn up by him, some years before, and intended to be submitted to the consideration of the Proprietors of both Houses:—

"Gentlemen,

"According to your desire, the plan of the proposed *Assistant Theatre* is here explained in writing for your further consideration.

"From your situations in the Theatres Royal of Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden we have had opportunities of observing many circumstances relative to our general property, which must have escaped those who do not materially interfere in the management of that property. One point in particular has lately weighed extremely in our opinions, which is, *an apprehension of a new Theatre being erected for some species or other of dramatic entertainment.* Were this event to take place on an opposing interest, our property would sink in value one half, and, in all probability, the contest that would ensue would speedily end in the absolute ruin of one of the present established Theatres. We have reason, it is true, from His Majesty's gracious patronage to the present Houses, to hope that a Third Patent for a winter Theatre is not *easily* to be obtained; but the motives which appear to call for one are so many, (and those of such a nature, as to increase every day,) that we cannot, on the maturest consideration of the subject, divest ourselves of the dreadthat such an event may not be very remote. With this apprehension before us, we have naturally fallen into a joint consideration of the means of preventing so fatal a blow to the present Theatres, or of deriving a general advantage from a circumstance which might otherwise be our ruin.

"Some of the leading motives for the establishment of a Third Theatre are as follows:—

"1st. The great extent of the town and increased residence of a higher class of people, who, on account of many circumstances, seldom frequent the Theatre.

"2d. The distant situation of the Theatres from the politer streets, and the difficulty with which ladies reach their carriages or chairs.

"3d. The small number of side-boxes, where only, by the uncontroulable influence of fashion, ladies of any rank can be induced to sit.

"4th. The earliness of the hour, which renders it absolutely impossible for those who attend on Parliament, live at any distance, or indeed, for any person who dines at the prevailing hour, to reach the Theatre before the performance is half over.

"These considerations have lately been strongly urged to me by many leading persons of rank. There has also prevailed, as appears by the number of private plays at gentlemen's seats, an unusual fashion for theatrical entertainments among the politer class of people; and it is not to be wondered at that they, feeling themselves (from the causes above enumerated), in a manner, excluded from our Theatres, should persevere in an endeavour to establish some plan of similar entertainment, on principles of superior elegance and accommodation.

"In proof of this disposition, and the effects to be apprehended from it, we need but instance one fact, among many which might be produced, and that is the well-known circumstance of a subscription having actually been begun last winter, with very powerful patronage, for the importation of a French company of comedians,—a scheme which, though it might not have answered to the undertaking, would certainly have been the foundation of other entertainments, whose opposition we should speedily have experienced. The question, then, upon a full view of our situation, appears to be whether the Proprietors of the present Theatres will contentedly wait till some other person takes advantage of the prevailing wish for a Third Theatre, or, having the remedy in their power, profit by a turn of fashion which they cannot controul.

"A full conviction that the latter is the only line of conduct which can give security to the Patents of Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden Theatres, and yield a probability of future advantage in the exercise of them, has prompted us to endeavour at modelling this plan, on which we conceive those Theatres may unite in the support of a Third, to the general and mutual advantage of all the Proprietors.

"PROPOSALS.

"The Proprietors of the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden appear to be possessed of two Patents for the privilege of acting plays, etc., under one of which the above-mentioned Theatre is opened,—the other lying dormant and useless;—it is proposed that this dormant Patent shall be exercised, (with His Majesty's approbation,) in order to license the dramatic performance of the new Theatre to be erected.

"It is proposed that the performances of this new Theatre shall be supported from the united establishments of the two present Theatres, so that the unemployed part of each company may exert themselves for the advantage of the whole.

"As the object of this *Assistant Theatre* will be to reimburse the Proprietors of the other two, at the full season; for the expensive establishment they are obliged to maintain when the town is almost empty, it is proposed, that the scheme of business to be adopted in the new Theatre shall differ as much as possible from that of the other two, and that the performances at the new house shall be exhibited at a superior price, and shall commence at a later hour.

"The Proposers will undertake to provide a Theatre for the purpose, in a proper situation, and on the following terms:—If they engage a Theatre to be built, being the property of the builder or builders; it must be for an agreed on rent, with security for a term of years. In this case the Proprietors of the two present Theatres shall jointly and severally engage in the whole of the risk; and the Proposers are ready on equitable terms, to undertake the management of it. But, if the Proposers find themselves enabled, either on their own credit, or by the assistance of their friends, or on a plan of subscription, the mode being devised, and the security given by themselves, to become the builders of the Theatre, the interest in the building will, in that case, be the property of the Proposers, and they will undertake to demand no rent for the performances therein to be exhibited for the mutual advantage of the two present Theatres.

"The Proposers will, in this case, conducting the business under the dormant Patent above mentioned, bind themselves, that no theatrical entertainments, as plays, farces, pantomimes, or English operas, shall at any time be exhibited in this Theatre but for the general advantage of the Proprietors of the other two Theatres; the Proposers reserving to themselves any profit they can make of their building, converted to purposes distinct from the business of the Theatres.

"The Proposers, undertaking the management of the new Theatre, shall be entitled to a sum to be settled by the Proprietors at large, or by an equitable arbitration.

"It is proposed, that all the Proprietors of the two present Theatres Royal of Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden shall share all profits from the dramatic entertainments exhibited at the new Theatre; that is, each shall be entitled to receive a dividend in proportion to the shares he or she possesses of the present Theatres: first only deducting a certain nightly sum to be paid to the Proprietors of Covent-Garden Theatre, as a consideration for the licence furnished by the exercise of their present dormant Patent.

"'Fore Heaven! the Plan's a good Plan! I shall add a little Epilogue to-morrow.

"R. B. S."

"'Tis now too late, and I've a letter to write
Before I go to bed,—and then, Good Night."

In the month of July, this year, the Installation of Lord Grenville, as Chancellor of Oxford, took place, and Mr. Sheridan was among the distinguished persons that attended the ceremony. As a number of honorary degrees were to be conferred on the occasion,

it was expected, as a matter of course, that his name would be among those selected for that distinction; and, to the honour of the University, it was the general wish among its leading members that such a tribute should be paid to his high political character. On the proposal of his name, however (in a private meeting, I believe, held previously to the Convocation), the words "*Non placet*" were heard from two scholars,—one of whom, it is said, had no nobler motive for his opposition than that Sheridan did not pay his father's tithes very regularly. Several efforts were made to win over these dissentients; and the Reverend Mr. Ingram delivered an able and liberal Latin speech, in which he indignantly represented the shame that it would bring on the University, if such a name as that of Sheridan should be "*clam subductum*" from the list. The two scholars, however, were immoveable; and nothing remained but to give Sheridan intimation of their intended opposition, so as to enable him to decline the honour of having his name proposed. On his appearance, afterwards, in the Theatre, a burst of acclamation broke forth, with a general cry of "Mr. Sheridan among the Doctors,—Sheridan among the Doctors; in compliance with which he was passed to the seat occupied by the Honorary Graduates, and sat, in unrobed distinction, among them, during the whole of the ceremonial. Few occurrences, of a public nature, ever gave him more pleasure than this reception.

At the close of the year 1810, the malady, with which the King had been thrice before afflicted, returned; and, after the usual adjournments of Parliament, it was found necessary to establish a Regency. On the question of the second adjournment, Mr. Sheridan took a line directly opposed to that of his party, and voted with the majority. That in this step he did not act from any previous concert with the Prince appears from the following letter, addressed by him to His Royal Highness on the subject, and containing particulars which will prepare the mind of the reader to judge more clearly of the events that followed :—

"Sir,

"I felt infinite satisfaction when I was apprised that Your Royal Highness had been far from disapproving the line of conduct I had presumed to pursue, on the last question of adjournment in the House of Commons. Indeed, I never had a moment's doubt but that Your Royal Highness would give me credit that I was actuated on that, as I shall on every other occasion through my existence, by no possible motive but the most sincere unmixed desire to look to Your Royal Highness's honour and true interest, as the objects of my political life,—directed as I am sure your efforts will ever be, to the essential interests of the Country and the Constitution. To this line of conduct I am prompted by every

motive of personal gratitude, and confirmed by every opportunity, which peculiar circumstances and long experience have afforded me, of judging of your heart and understanding,—to the superior excellence of which (beyond all, I believe, that ever stood in your rank and high relation to society), I fear not to advance my humble testimony, because I scruple not to say for myself, that I am no flatterer, and that I never found that to *become* one was the road to your real regard.

"I state thus much because it has been under the influence of these feelings that I have not felt myself warranted (without any previous communication with Your Royal Highness) to follow implicitly the dictates of others, in whom, however they may be my superiors in many qualities, I can subscribe to no superiority as to devoted attachment and duteous affection to Your Royal Highness, or in that practical knowledge of the public mind and character, upon which alone must be built that popular and personal estimation of Your Royal Highness, so necessary to your future happiness and glory, and to the prosperity of the nation you are destined to rule over.

"On these grounds, I saw no policy or consistency in unnecessarily giving a general sanction to the examination of the physicians before the Council, and then attempting, on the question of adjournment, to hold that examination as nought. On these grounds I have ventured to doubt the wisdom or propriety of any endeavour (if any such endeavour has been made) to induce Your Royal Highness, during so critical a moment, to stir an inch from the strong reserved post you had chosen, or give the slightest public demonstration of any future intended political preferences;—convinced as I was that the rule of conduct you had prescribed to yourself was precisely that which was gaining you the general heart, and rendering it impracticable for any quarter to succeed in annexing unworthy conditions to that most difficult situation, which you were probably so soon to be called on to accept.

"I may, Sir, have been guilty of error of judgment in both these respects, differing, as I fear I have done, from those whom I am bound so highly to respect; but, at the same time, I deem it no presumption to say that, until better instructed, I feel a strong confidence in the justness of my own view of the subject; and simply because of *this*—I am sure that the decisions of that judgment, be they sound or mistaken, have not at least been rashly taken up, but were founded on deliberate zeal for your service and glory, unmixed, I will confidently say, with any one selfish object or political purpose of my own."

The same limitations and restrictions that Mr. Pitt proposed in 1789, were, upon the same principles, adopted by the present Minister: nor did the Opposition differ otherwise from their former line of argument, than by omitting altogether that claim of Right for the Prince, which Mr. Fox had, in the proceedings of 1789, asserted. The event that ensued is sufficiently well known. To the surprise of the public (who expected, perhaps, rather than wished, that the Coalesced Party, of which Lord Grey and Lord Grenville were chiefs, should now succeed to power), Mr. Perceval and his

colleagues were informed by the Regent that it was the intention of His Royal Highness to continue them still in office.

The share taken by Mr. Sheridan in the transactions that led to this decision, is one of those passages of his political life upon which the criticism of his own party has been most severely exercised, and into the details of which I feel most difficulty in entering:—because, however curious it may be to penetrate into these "*post-scenia*" of public life, it seems hardly delicate, while so many of the chief actors are still upon the stage. As there exists, however, a Paper drawn up by Mr. Sheridan, containing what he considered a satisfactory defence of his conduct on this occasion, I should ill discharge my duty towards his memory, were I, from any scruples or predilections of my own, to deprive him of the advantage of a statement, on which he appears to have relied so confidently for his vindication.

But, first,—in order fully to understand the whole course of feelings and circumstances by which not only Sheridan, but his Royal Master (for their cause is, in a great degree, identified), were, for some time past, predisposed towards the line of conduct which they now pursued,—it will be necessary to recur to a few antecedent events.

By the death of Mr. Fox the chief *personal* tie that connected the Heir-Apparent with the party of that statesman was broken. The *political* identity of the party itself had, even before that event, been, in a great degree, disturbed, by a coalition against which Sheridan had always most strongly protested, and to which the Prince, there is every reason to believe, was by no means friendly. Immediately after the death of Mr. Fox, His Royal Highness made known his intentions of withdrawing from all personal interference in politics; and, though still continuing his sanction to the remaining Ministry, expressed himself as no longer desirous of being considered "a party man [1]." During the short time that these Ministers continued in office, the understanding between them and the Prince was by no means of that cordial and confidential kind, which had been invariably maintained during the life-time of Mr. Fox. On the contrary, the impression on the mind of His Royal Highness, as well as on those of his immediate friends in the Ministry,

[1] This is the phrase used by the Prince himself, in a Letter addressed to a Noble Lord, (not long after the dismissal of the Grenville Ministry,) for the purpose of vindicating his own character from some imputations cast upon it, in consequence of an interview which he had lately had with the King. This important exposition of the feelings of His Royal Highness, which, more than any thing, throws light upon his subsequent conduct, was drawn up by Sheridan; and I had hoped that I should have been able to lay it before the reader:—but the liberty of perusing the Letter is all that has been allowed me.

Lord Moira and Mr. Sheridan, was, that a cold neglect had succeeded to the confidence with which they had hitherto been treated; and that, neither in their opinions or feelings, were they any longer sufficiently consulted or considered. The very measure, by which the Ministers ultimately lost their places, was, it appears, one of those which the Illustrious Personage in question neither conceived himself to have been sufficiently consulted upon before its adoption, nor approved of afterwards.

Such were the gradual loosenings of a bond, which at no time had promised much permanence; and such the train of feelings and circumstances which (combining with certain prejudices in the Royal mind against one of the chief leaders of the party) prepared the way for that result by which the Public was surprised in 1811, and the private details of which I shall now, as briefly as possible, relate.

As soon as the Bill for regulating the office of Regent had passed the two Houses, the Prince, who, till then, had maintained a strict reserve with respect to his intentions, signified, through Mr. Adam, his pleasure that Lord Grenville should wait upon him. He then, in the most gracious manner, expressed to that Noble Lord his wish that he should, in conjunction with Lord Grey, prepare the Answer which His Royal Highness was, in a few days, to return to the Address of the Houses. The same confidential task was entrusted also to Lord Moira, with an expressed desire that he should consult with Lord Grey and Lord Grenville on the subject. But this co-operation, as I understand, the two Noble Lords declined.

One of the embarrassing consequences of coalitions now appeared. The recorded opinions of Lord Grenville on the Regency question differed wholly and in principle not only from those of his coadjutor in this task, but from those of the Royal person himself, whose sentiments he was called upon to interpret. In this difficulty the only alternative that remained was so to neutralize the terms of the Answer upon the great point of difference, as to preserve the consistency of the Royal speaker, without at the same time compromising that of his Noble adviser. It required, of course, no small art and delicacy thus to throw into the shade that distinctive opinion of Whiggism, which Burke had clothed in his imperishable language in 1789, and which Fox had solemnly bequeathed to the Party, when

> "in his upward flight
> He left his mantle there [1]."

The Answer, drawn up by the Noble Lords, did not, it must be confessed, surmount this difficulty very skilfully. The assertion of

[1] Joanna Baillie.

the Prince's consistency was confined to two meagre sentences, in the first of which His Royal Highness was made to say :—"With respect to the proposed limitation of the authority to be entrusted to me, I retain my former opinion :"—and in the other, the expression of any decided opinion upon the Constitutional point is thus evaded :—"For such a purpose no restraint can be *necessary* to be imposed upon me." Somewhat less vague and evasive, however, was the justification of the opinion opposed to that of the Prince, in the following sentence :—"That day, when I may restore to the King those powers which, *as belonging only to him* [1], are in his name and in his behalf," etc., etc. This, it will be recollected, is precisely the doctrine which, on the great question of limiting the Prerogative, Mr. Fox attributed to the Tories. In another passage, the Whig opinion of the Prince was thus tamely surrendered :—"Conscious that, whatever *degree* of confidence you may *think fit* to repose in me," etc. [2].

The answer, thus constructed, was, by the two Noble Lords, transmitted, through Mr. Adam, to the Prince, who, "strongly objecting (as we are told) to almost every part of it," acceded to the suggestion of Sheridan, whom he consulted on the subject, that a new form of Answer should be immediately sketched out, and submitted to the consideration of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville. There was no time to be lost, as the Address of the Houses was to be received the following day. Accordingly, Mr. Adam and Mr. Sheridan proceeded that night, with the new draft of the Answer, to Holland-House, where, after a warm discussion, upon the subject with Lord Grey, which ended unsatisfactorily to both Parties, the final result was that the Answer drawn up by the Prince and Sheridan was adopted.—Such is the bare outline of this transaction, the circumstances of which will be found fully detailed in the Statement that shall presently be given.

The accusation against Sheridan is, that chiefly to his undermining influence the view taken by the Prince of the Paper of these Noble Lords is to be attributed; and that not only was he censurable in a constitutional point of view, for thus interfering between the Sovereign and his responsible advisers, but that he had been also guilty of an act of private perfidy, in endeavouring

[1] The words which I have put in italics in these quotations are, in the same manner, underlined in Sheridan's copy of the Paper,—doubtless, from a similar view of their import to that which I have taken.

[2] On the back of Sheridan's own copy of this Answer, I find, written by him, the following words : "Grenville's and Grey's proposed Answer from the prince to the Address of the two Houses; — very flimsy, and attempting to cover Grenville's conduct and consistency in supporting the present Restrictions at the expense of the Prince."

to represent the Answer drawn up by these Noble Lords, as an attempt to sacrifice the consistency and dignity of their Royal Master to the compromise of opinions and principles which they had entered into themselves.

Under the impression that such were the nature and motives of his interference, Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, on the 11th of January (the day on which the Answer substituted for their own was delivered) presented a joint Representation to the Regent, in which they stated that "the circumstances which had occurred respecting His Royal Highness's Answer to the two Houses, had induced them, most humbly, to solicit permission to submit to His Royal Highness the following considerations, with the undisguised sincerity which the occasion seemed to require, but, with every expression that could best convey their respectful duty and inviolable attachment. When His Royal Highness (they continued) did Lord Grenville the honour, through Mr. Adam, to command his attendance, it was distinctly expressed to him, that His Royal Highness had condescended to select him, in conjunction with Lord Grey, to be consulted with, as the public and responsible advisers of that Answer; and Lord Grenville could never forget the gracious terms in which His Royal Highness had the goodness to lay these his orders upon him. It was also on the same grounds of public and responsible advice, that Lord Grey, honoured in like manner by the most gracious expression of His Royal Highness's confidence on this subject, applied himself to the consideration of it conjointly with Lord Grenville. They could not but feel the difficulty of the undertaking which required them to reconcile two objects, essentially different,—to uphold and distinctly to manifest that unshaken adherence to His Royal Highness's past and present opinion, which consistency and honour required, but to conciliate, at the same time, the feelings of the two Houses, by expressions of confidence and affection, and to lay the foundation of that good understanding between His Royal Highness and the Parliament, the establishment of which must be the first wish of every man who is truly attached to His Royal Highness, and who knows the value of the Constitution of his country. Lord Grey and Lord Grenville were far from the presumption of believing that their humble endeavours for the execution of so difficult a task might not be susceptible of many and great amendments.

"The draft (their Lordships said) which they humbly submitted to His Royal Highness was considered by them as open to every remark which might occur to His Royal Highness's better judgment. On every occasion, but more especially in the preparation of His Royal Highness's first act of government, it would have been no less their desire than their

duty to have profited by all such objections, and to have laboured to accomplish, in the best manner they were able, every command which His Royal Highness might have been pleased to lay upon them. Upon the objects to be obtained there could be no difference of sentiment These, such as above described, were, they confidently believed, not less important in His Royal Highness's view of the subject than in that which they themselves had ventured to express. But they would be wanting in that sincerity and openness by which they could alone hope, however imperfectly, to make any return to that gracious confidence with which His Royal Highness had condescended to honour them, if they suppressed the expression of their deep concern, in finding that their humble endeavours in His Royal Highness's service had been submitted to the judgment of another person, by whose advice His Royal Highness had been guided in his final decision, on a matter on which they alone had, however unworthily, been honoured with His Royal Highness's commands. It was their most sincere and ardent wish that, in the arduous station which His Royal Highness was about to fill, he might have the benefit of the public advice and responsible services of those men, whoever they might be, by whom His Royal Highness's glory and the interests of the country could best be promoted. It would be with unfeigned distrust of their own means of discharging such duties that they could, in any case, venture to undertake them; and, in this humble but respectful representation which they had presumed to make of their feelings on this occasion, they were conscious of being actuated not less by their dutiful and grateful attachment to His Royal Highness, than by those principles of constitutional responsibility, the maintenance of which they deemed essential to any hope of a successful administration of the public interests."

On receiving this Representation, in which, it must be confessed, there was more of high spirit and dignity than of worldly wisdom [1], His Royal Highness lost no time in communicating it to Sheridan, who, proud of the influence attributed to him by the Noble writers, and now more than ever stimulated to make them feel its weight,

[1] To the pure and dignified character of the Noble Whig associated in this Remonstrance, it is unnecessary for me to say how heartily I bear testimony. The only fault, indeed, of this distinguished person is, that, knowing but one high course of conduct for himself, he impatiently resents any sinking from that pitch in others. Then, only, in his true station, when placed between the People and the Crown, as one of those fortresses that ornament and defend the frontier of Democracy, he has shown that he can but ill suit the dimensions of his spirit to the narrow avenues of a Court, or, like that Pope who *stooped* to look for the keys of St. Peter, accommodate his natural elevation to the pursuit of official power. All the pliancy of his nature is, indeed, reserved for private life, where the repose of the valley succeeds to the grandeur of the mountain, and where the lofty statesman gracefully subsides into the gentle husband and father, and the frank, social friend.

The eloquence of Lord Grey, more than that of any other person, brings to mind what Quintilian says of the great and noble orator, Messala:—"*Quodammodo præ se ferens in dicendo nobilitatem suam.*"

employed the whole force of his shrewdness and ridicule[1] in exposing the stately tone of dictation which, according to his view, was assumed throughout this Paper, and in picturing to the Prince the state of tutelage he might expect, under Ministers who began thus early with their lectures. Such suggestions, even if less ably urged, were but too sure of a willing audience in the ears to which they were addressed. Shortly after, His Royal Highness paid a visit to Windsor, where the Queen and another Royal Personage completed what had been so skilfully begun; and the important resolution was forthwith taken to retain Mr. Perceval and his colleagues in the Ministry.

I shall now give the Statement of the whole transaction, which Mr. Sheridan thought it necessary to address, in his own defence, to Lord Holland, and of which a rough and a fair copy have been found carefully preserved among his papers:—

"Dear Holland, *Queen-Street, January* 15, 1811.

"As you have been already apprised by His Royal Highness the Prince that he thought it becoming the frankness of his character, and consistent with the fairness and openness of proceeding due to any of his servants whose conduct appears to have incurred the disapprobation of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, to communicate their representations on the subject to the person so censured, I am confident you will give me credit for the pain I must have felt, to find myself an object of suspicion, or likely, in the slightest degree, to become the cause of any temporary misunderstanding between His Royal Highness and those distinguished characters, whom His Royal Highness appears to destine to those responsible situations, which must in all public matters entitle them to his exclusive confidence.

"I shall, as briefly as I can, state the circumstances of the fact, so distinctly referred to in the following passage of the Noble Lords' Representation:—

" 'But they would be wanting in that sincerity and openness by which they can alone hope, however imperfectly, to make any return to that gracious confidence with which Your Royal Highness has condescended to honour them, if they suppressed the expression of their deep concern in finding that their humble endeavours in Your Royal Highness's service have been submitted to the judgment of another person, *by whose ad-*

[1] He called rhymes also to his aid, as appears by the following:—

" *An Address to the Prince*, 1811.

" In all humility we crave
Our Regent may become our slave,
And being so, we trust that He
Will thank us for our loyalty.
Then, if he'll help us to pull down
His Father's dignity and Crown,
We'll make him, in some time to come,
The greatest Prince in Christendom."

vice Your Royal Highness has been guided in your final decision on a matter in which they alone had, however unworthily, been honoured with Your Royal Highness's commands.'

"I must premise, that from my first intercourse with the Prince during the present distressing emergency, such conversation as he may have honoured me with have been communications of resolutions already formed on his part, and not of matter referred to consultation, or submitted to *advice*. I know that my declining to vote for the further adjournment of the Privy Council's examination of the physicians gave offence to some, and was considered as a difference from the party I was rightly esteemed to belong to. The intentions of the leaders of the party upon that question were in no way distinctly known to me; my secession was entirely my own act, and not only unauthorised, but perhaps unexpected by the Prince. My motives for it I took the liberty of communicating to His Royal Highness, by letter [a], the next day, and, previously to that, I had not even seen His Royal Highness since the confirmation of His Majesty's malady.

"If I differed from those who, equally attached to His Royal Highness's interest and honour, thought that His Royal Highness should have taken the step which, in my humble opinion, he has since, precisely at the proper period, taken, of sending to Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, I may certainly have erred in forming an imperfect judgment on the occasion, but, in doing so, I meant no disrespect to those who had taken a different view of the subject. But, with all deference, I cannot avoid adding, that experience of the impression made on the public mind by the reserved and retired conduct which the Prince thought proper to adopt, has not shaken my opinion of the wisdom which prompted him to that determination. But here, again, I declare, that I must reject the presumption that any suggestion of mine led to the rule which the Prince had prescribed to himself, my knowledge of it being, as I before said, the communication of a resolution formed on the part of His Royal Highness, and not of a proposition awaiting the advice, countenance, or corroboration, of any other person. Having thought it necessary to premise thus much, as I wish to write to you without reserve or concealment of any sort, I shall as briefly as I can relate the facts which attended the composing the Answer itself, as far as I was concerned.

"On Sunday, or on Monday the 7th instant, I mentioned to Lord Moira or to Adam, that the Address of the two Houses would come very quickly upon the Prince, and that he should be prepared with his Answer, without entertaining the least idea of meddling with the subject myself, having received no authority from His Royal Highness to do so. Either Lord Moira or Adam informed me, before I left Carlton-House, that His Royal Highness had directed Lord Moira to sketch an outline of the Answer proposed, and I left town. On Tuesday evening it occurred to me to try at a sketch also of the intended reply. On Wednesday morning I read it, at Carlton-House, very hastily to Adam before I saw the Prince. And here I must pause to declare, that I have entirely withdrawn from my mind any doubt, if for a moment I ever entertained any,

[a] This Letter has been given in page 402, vol. ii.

of the perfect propriety of Adam's conduct at that hurried interview; being also long convinced, as well from intercourse with him at Carlton-House as in every transaction I have witnessed, that it is impossible for him to act otherwise than with the most entire sincerity and honour towards all he deals with. I then read the Paper I had put together to the Prince,—the most essential part of it literally consisting of sentiments and expressions, which had fallen from the Prince himself in different conversations; and I read it to him without *having once heard Lord Grenville's name* even mentioned, as in any way connected with the Answer proposed to be submitted to the Prince. On the contrary, indeed, I was under an impression that the framing this Answer was considered as the single act which it would be an unfair and embarrassing task to require the performance of from Lord Grenville. The Prince approved the Paper I read to him, objecting however, to some additional paragraph of my own, and altering others. In the course of his observations, he cursorily mentioned that Lord Grenville had undertaken to sketch out his idea of a proper Answer, and that Lord Moira had done the same,—evidently expressing himself, to my apprehension, as not considering the framing of this Answer as a matter of official responsibility any where, but that it was his intention to take the choice and decision respecting it on himself. If, however, I had known, before I entered the Prince's apartment, that Lord Grenville and Lord Grey had in any way undertaken to frame the Answer, and had thought themselves authorised to do so, I protest the Prince would never even have heard of the draft which I had prepared, though containing, as I before said, the Prince's own ideas.

"His Royal Highness having laid his commands on Adam and me to dine with him alone on the next day, Thursday, I then, for the first time, learnt that Lord Grey and Lord Grenville had transmitted, through Adam, a formal draft of an Answer to be submitted to the Prince.

"Under these circumstances I thought it became me humbly to request the Prince not to refer to me, in any respect, the Paper of the Noble Lords, or to insist even on my hearing its contents; but that I might be permitted to put the draft he had received from me into the fire. The Prince, however, who had read the Noble Lords' Paper, declining to hear of this, proceeded to state how strongly he objected to almost every part of it. The draft delivered by Adam he took a copy of himself, as Mr. Adam read it, affixing shortly, but warmly, his comments to each paragraph. Finding His Royal Highness's objections to the whole radical and insuperable, and seeing no means myself by which the Noble Lords could change their draft, so as to meet the Prince's ideas, I ventured to propose, as the only expedient of which the time allowed, that both the Papers should be laid aside, and that a very short Answer, indeed, keeping clear of all topics liable to disagreement, should be immediately sketched out, and be submitted that night to the judgment of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville. The lateness of the hour prevented any but very hasty discussion, and Adam and myself proceeded, by His Royal Highness's orders, to your house to relate what had passed to Lord Grey. I do not mean to disguise, however, that when I found myself bound to give my opinion, I did fully assent to the force and justice of the Prince's

objections, and made other observations of my own, which I thought it my duty to do, conceiving, as I freely said, that the Paper could not have been drawn up but under the pressure of embarrassing difficulties, and, as I conceived also, in considerable haste.

"Before we left Carlton-House, it was agreed between Adam and myself that we were not so strictly enjoined by the Prince, as to make it necessary for us to communicate to the Noble Lords the marginal comments of the Prince, and we determined to withhold them. But at the meeting with Lord Grey, at your house, he appeared to me, erroneously perhaps, to decline considering the objections as coming from the Prince, but as originating in my suggestions. Upon this, I certainly called on Adam to produce the Prince's copy, with his notes, in His Royal Highness's own hand-writing.

"Afterwards, finding myself considerably hurt at an expression of Lord Grey's, which could only be pointed at me, and which expressed his opinion that the whole of the Paper, which he assumed me to be responsible for, was 'drawn up in an invidious spirit,' I certainly did, with more warmth than was perhaps discreet, comment on the Paper proposed to be substituted; and there ended, with no good effect, our interview.

"Adam and I saw the Prince again that night, when His Royal Highness was graciously pleased to meet our joint and earnest request, by striking out from the draft of the Answer, to which he still resolved to adhere, every passage which we conceived to be most liable to objection on the part of Lord Grey and Lord Grenville.

"On the next morning, Friday,—a short time before he was to receive the Address,—when Adam returned from the Noble Lords, with their expressed disclaimer of the preferred Answer, altered as it was, His Royal Highness still persevered to eradicate every remaining word which he thought might yet appear exceptionable to them, and made further alterations, although the fair copy of the paper had been made out.

"Thus the Answer, nearly reduced to the expression of the Prince's own suggestions, and without an opportunity of farther meeting the wishes of the Noble Lords, was delivered by His Royal Highness, and presented by the Deputation of the two Houses.

"I am ashamed to have been thus prolix and circumstantial upon a matter which may appear to have admitted of much shorter explanation: but when misconception has produced distrust among those, I hope, not willingly disposed to differ, and who can have, I equally trust, but one common object in view in their different stations, I know no better way than by minuteness and accuracy of detail to remove whatever may have appeared doubtful in conduct while unexplained, or inconsistent in principle not clearly re-asserted.

"And now, my dear Lord, I have only shortly to express my own personal mortification, I will use no other word, that I should have been considered by any persons, however high in rank, or justly entitled to high political pretensions, as one so little 'attached to His Royal Highness,' or so ignorant of the value 'of the Constitution of his country,' as to be held out to HIM, whose fairly-earned esteem I regard as the first honour and the sole reward of my political life, in the character of an

interested contriver of a double government, and, in some measure, as an apostate from all my former principles,—which have taught me, as well as the Noble Lords, that 'the maintenance of constitutional responsibility in the ministers of the Crown is essential to any hope of success in the administration of the public interest.'

"At the same time, I am most ready to admit that it could not be their *intention* so to characterise me; but it is the direct inference which others must gather from the first paragraph I have quoted from their Representation, and an inference which, I understand, has already been raised in public opinion. A departure, my dear Lord, on my part, from upholding the principle declared by the Noble Lords, much more a persumptuous and certainly ineffectual attempt to inculcate a contrary doctrine on the mind of the Prince of Wales, would, I am confident, lose me every particle of his favour and confidence at once and for ever. But I am yet to learn what part of my past public life,—and I challenge observation on every part of my present proceedings,—has warranted the adoption of any such suspicion of me, or the expression of any such imputation against me. But I will dwell no longer on this point, as it relates only to my own feelings and character; which, however, I am the more bound to consider, as others, in my humble judgment, have so hastily disregarded both. At the same time, I do sincerely declare, that no personal disappointment in my own mind interferes with the respect and esteem I entertain for Lord Grenville, or in addition to those sentiments, the friendly regard I owe to Lord Grey. To Lord Grenville I have the honour to be but very little personally known. From Lord Grey, intimately acquainted as he was with every circumstance of my conduct and principles in the years 1788—9, I confess I should have expected a very tardy and reluctant interpretation of any circumstance to my disadvantage. What the nature of my endeavours were at that time, I have the written testimonies of Mr. Fox and the Duke of Portland. To you I know those testimonies are not necessary, and perhaps it has been my recollection of what passed in those times that may have led me too securely to conceive myself above the reach even of a suspicion that I could adopt different principles now. Such as they were they remain untouched and unaltered. I conclude with sincerely declaring, that to see the Prince meeting the reward which his own honourable nature, his kind and generous disposition, and his genuine devotion to the true objects of our free Constitution so well entitle him to, by being surrounded and supported by an Administration affectionate to his person, and ambitious of gaining and meriting his entire esteem, (yet tenacious, above all things, of the constitutional principle, that exclusive confidence must attach to the responsibility of those whom he selects to be his public servants,) I would with heartfelt satisfaction rather be a looker-on of such a Government, giving it such humble support as might be in my power, than be the possessor of any possible situation either of profit or ambition, to be obtained by any indirectness, or by the slightest departure from the principles I have always professed, and which I have now felt myself in a manner called upon to re-assert.

"I have only to add, that my respect for the Prince, and my sense of the frankness he has shown towards me on this occasion, decide me,

with all duty, to submit this letter to his perusal, before I place it in your hands; meaning it undoubtedly to be by you shown to those to whom your judgment may deem it of any consequence to communicate it.

"I have the honour to be, etc.

"*To Lord Holland.* (Signed) "R. B. SHERIDAN.

"Read and approved by the Prince, January 20. 1811.

"R. B. S."

Though this Statement, it must be recollected, exhibits but one side of the question, and is silent as to the part that Sheridan took after the delivery of the Remonstrance of the two Noble Lords, yet, combined with preceding events and with the insight into motives which they afford, it may sufficiently enable the reader to form his own judgment, with respect to the conduct of the different persons concerned in the transaction. With the better and more ostensible motives of Sheridan; there was, no doubt, some mixture of what the Platonists call the "material alluvion" of our nature. His political repugnance to the Coalesced Leaders would have been less strong but for the personal feelings that mingled with it; and his anxiety that the Prince should not be dictated to by others, was at least equalled by his vanity in showing that he could govern him himself. But, whatever were the precise views that impelled him to this trial of strength, the victory which he gained in it was far more extensive than he himself had either foreseen or wished. He had meant the party to *feel* his power,—not to sink under it. Though privately alienated from them, on personal as well as political grounds, he knew that, publicly, he was too much identified with their ranks, ever to serve, with credit or consistency, in any other. He had, therefore, in the ardour of undermining, carried the ground from beneath his own feet. In helping to disband his party, he had cashiered himself; and there remained to him now, for the residue of his days, but that frailest of all sublunary treasures, a Prince's friendship.

With this conviction, (which, in spite of all the sanguineness of his disposition, could hardly have failed to force itself on his mind,) it was not, we should think, with very self-gratulatory feelings that he undertook the task, a few weeks after, of inditing, for the Regent, that memorable Letter to Mr. Perceval, which sealed the fate at once both of his party and himself, and, whatever false signs of re-animation may afterwards have appeared, severed the last *life-lock* by which the "struggling spirit[1]" of this friendship between Royalty and Whiggism still held:—

——"*dextra crinem secat, omnis et una*
Dilapsus calor, atque in ventos vita recessit."

[1] *Luctans anima.*

With respect to the chief Personage connected with these transactions, it is a proof of the tendency of knowledge to produce a spirit of tolerance, that they who, judging merely from the surface of events, have been most forward in reprobating his separation from the Whigs, as a rupture of political ties and an abandonment of private friendships, must, on becoming more thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances that led to this crisis, learn to soften down considerably their angry feelings; and to see, indeed, in the whole history of the connexion,—from its first formation, in the hey-day of youth and party, to its faint survival after the death of Mr. Fox,—but a natural and destined gradation towards the result at which it at last arrived, after as much fluctuation of political principle on one side, as there was of indifference, perhaps, to all political principle on the other.

Among the arrangements that had been made, in contemplation of a new Ministry, at this time, it was intended that Lord Moira should go, as Lord Lieutenant to Ireland, and that Mr. Sheridan should accompany him as Chief Secretary.

CHAPTER XXI.

Affairs of the New Theatre.—Mr. Whitbread.—Negotiations with Lord Grey and Lord Grenville.—Conduct of Mr. Sheridan relative to the Household.—His last words in Parliament.—Failure at Stafford.—Correspondence with Mr. Whitbread.—Lord Byron.—Distresses of Sheridan.—Illness.—Death and Funeral.—General Remarks.

It was not till the close of this year that the Reports of the Committee, appointed under the Act for rebuilding the Theatre of Drury-Lane, were laid before the public. By these it appeared that Sheridan was to receive, for his moiety of the property, 24,000*l.*, out of which sum the claims of the Linley family and others were to be satisfied;—that a further sum of 4000*l.* was to be paid to him for the property of the Fruit Offices and Reversion of Boxes and Shares;—and that his son, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, was to receive, for his quarter of the Patent Property, 12,000*l.*

The gratitude that Sheridan felt to Mr. Whitbread at first, for the kindness with which he undertook this most arduous task, did not long remain unembittered when they entered into practical details. It would be difficult indeed to find two persons less likely to agree in a transaction of this nature—the one, in affairs of business, approaching almost as near to the extreme of rigour as the other to that of laxity. While Sheridan, too,—like those painters who endeavour to disguise their ignorance of anatomy by an indistinct and *furzy* outline,—had an imposing method of generalising his ac-

counts and statements, which, to most eyes, concealed the negligence and fallacy of the details, Mr. Whitbread, on the contrary, with an unrelenting accuracy, laid open the minutiæ of every transaction, and made evasion as impossible to others as it was alien and inconceivable to himself. He was, perhaps, the only person whom Sheridan had ever found proof against his powers of persuasion;—and this rigidity naturally mortified his pride full as much as it thwarted and disconcerted his views.

Among the conditions to which he agreed, in order to facilitate the arrangements of the Committee, the most painful to him was that which stipulated that he himself should "have no concern or connexion, of any kind whatever, with the new undertaking." This concession, however, he, at first, regarded as a mere matter of form—feeling confident that, even without any effort of his own, the necessity under which the new Committee would find themselves of recurring to his advice and assistance, would ere long reinstate him in all his former influence. But in this hope he was disappointed—his exclusion from all concern in the new Theatre (which, it is said, was made a *sine qua non* by all who embarked in it,) was inexorably enforced by Whitbread; and the following letter addressed by him to the latter will show the state of their respective feelings on this point:—

"My dear Whitbread,

"I am not going to write you a controversial or even an argumentative letter, but simply to put down the heads of a few matters which I wish shortly to converse with you upon, in the most amicable and temperate manner, deprecating the impatience which may sometimes have mixed in our discussions, and not contending who has been the aggressor.

"The main point you seem to have had so much at heart you have carried, so there is an end of that; and I shall as fairly and cordially endeavour to advise and assist Mr. Benjamin Wyatt in the improving and perfecting his plan as if it had been my own preferable selection, assuming, as I must do, that there cannot exist an individual in England so presumptuous, or so void of common sense, as not sincerely to solicit the aid of my practical experience on this occasion, even were I not, in justice to the Subscribers, bound spontaneously to offer it.

"But it would be unmanly dissimulation in me to retain the sentiments I do with respect to *your* doctrine on this subject, and not express what I so strongly feel. That doctrine was, to my utter astonishment, to say no more, first promulgated to me in a letter from you, written in town, in the following terms. Speaking of building and plans, you say to me, '*You are in no way answerable if a bad Theatre is built: it is not* YOU *who build it; and if we come to the* STRICT RIGHT *of the thing, you have* NO BUSINESS TO INTERFERE:' and further on you say, '*Will* YOU *but* STAND ALOOF, *and every thing will go smooth*, and a good Theatre

shall be built;' and in conversation you put, as a similar case, that '*if a man sold another a piece of land, it was nothing to the seller whether the purchaser built himself a good or a bad house upon it.*' Now I declare before God I never felt more amazement than that a man of your powerful intellect, just view of all subjects, and knowledge of the world, should hold such language, or resort to such arguments; and I must be convinced, that, although in an impatient moment this opinion may have fallen from you, upon the least reflection or the slightest attention to the reason of the case, you would, 'albeit unused to the retracting mood,' confess the erroneous view you had taken of the subject. Otherwise, I must think, and with the deepest regret would it be, that although you originally engaged in this business from motives of the purest and kindest regard for me and my family, your ardour and zealous eagerness to accomplish the difficult task you had undertaken have led you, in this instance, to overlook what is due to my feelings, to my honour, and my just interests. For, supposing I were to '*stand aloof*,' totally unconcerned, provided I were paid for my share, whether the new Theatre were excellent or execrable, and that the result should be that the Subscribers, instead of profit, could not through the misconstruction of the house, obtain one per cent. for their money, do you seriously believe you could find a single man, woman, or child, in the kingdom, out of the committee, who would believe that I was wholly guiltless of the failure, having been so stultified and proscribed by the Committee, (a Committee of *my own nomination,*) as to have been compelled to admit, as the condition of my being paid for my share, that 'it was nothing to me whether the Theatre was good or bad?' or, on the contrary, can it be denied that the reproaches of disappointment, through the great body of the Subscribers, would be directed against me, and me alone?

"So much as to *character*:—now as to my feelings on the subject,—I must say that in friendship, at least, if not in '*strict right*,' they ought to be consulted, even though the Committee could either prove that I had not to apprehend any share in the discredit and discontent which might follow the ill success of their plan, or that I was entitled to brave whatever malice or ignorance might direct against me. Next, and lastly, as to my just interest in the property I am to part with, a consideration to which, however careless I might be were I alone concerned, I am bound to attend in justice to my own private creditors, observe how the matter stands:—I agree to wave my own '*strict right*' to be paid before the funds can be applied to the building, and this in the confidence and on the continued understanding, that my advice should be so far respected that even should the subscription not fill, I should at least see a Theatre capable of being charged with, and ultimately of discharging, what should remain justly due to the proprietors. To illustrate this I refer to the size of the pit, the number of private boxes, and the annexation of a tavern; but in what a situation would the doctrine of your Committee leave me and my son? 'It is nothing to us how the Theatre is built or whether it prospers or not.' These are two circumstances we have nothing to do with; only, unfortunately, upon *them* may depend our best chance of receiving any payment for the

property we part with. It is nothing to us how the ship is refitted or manned, only we must leave all we are worth on board her, and abide the chance of her success. Now I am confident your justice will see, that in order that the Committee should, in '*strict right,*' become entitled to deal thus with us, and bid us *stand aloof,* they should buy us out, and make good the payment. But the reverse of this has been my own proposal, and I neither repent nor wish to make any change in it.

"I have totally departed from my intention, when I first began this letter, for which I ought to apologize to you; but it may save much future talk: other less important matters will do in conversation. You will allow that I have placed in you the most implicit confidence—have the reasonable trust in me that, in any communication I may have with B. Wyatt, my object will not be to *obstruct,* as you have hastily expressed it, but *bonâ fide* to assist him to render his Theatre as perfect as possible, as well with a view to the public accommodation as to profit to the Subscribers; neither of which can be obtained without establishing a reputation for him which must be the basis of his future fortune.

"And now, after all this statement, you will perhaps be surprised to find how little I require,—simply some Resolution of the Committee to the effect of that I enclose.

"I conclude with heartily thanking you for the declaration you made respecting me, and reported to me by Peter Moore, at the close of the last meeting of the Committee. I am convinced of your sincerity; but as I have before described the character of the gratitude I feel towards you in a letter written likewise in this house, I have only to say, that every sentiment in that letter remains unabated and unalterable.

"Ever, my dar Whitbread,

"Yours, faithfully.

"P. S. The discussion we had yesterday respecting some investigation of the *past,* which I deem so essential to my character and to my peace of mind, and your present concurrence with me on that subject, have relieved my mind from great anxiety, though I cannot but still think the better opportunity has been passed by. One word more, and I release you. Tom informed me that you had hinted to him that any demands, not practicable to be settled by the Committee, must fall on the proprietors. My resolution is to take all such on myself, and to leave Tom's share untouched."

Another concession, which Sheridan himself had volunteered, namely, the postponement of his right of being paid the amount of his claim, till after the Theatre should be built, was also a subject of much acrimonious discussion between the two friends,—Sheridan applying to this condition that sort of lax interpretation, which would have left him the credit of the sacrifice without its inconvenience, and Whitbread, with a firmness of grasp, to which, unluckily, the other had been unaccustomed in business, holding him to the strict letter of his voluntary agreement with the Subscribers. Never, indeed, was there a more melancholy example than

Sheridan exhibited, at this moment, of the last, hard struggle of pride and delicacy against the most deadly foe of both, pecuniary involvement,—which thus gathers round its victims, fold after fold, till they are at length crushed in its inextricable clasp.

The mere likelihood of a sum of money being placed at his disposal was sufficient—like the "bright day that brings forth the adder"—to call into life the activity of all his duns; and how liberally he made the fund available among them, appears from the following letter of Whitbread, addressed, not to Sheridan himself, but, apparently, (the direction is wanting,) to some man of business connected with him: —

"My dear Sir,

"I had determined not to give any written answer to the note you put into my hands yesterday morning; but a further perusal of it leads me to think it better to make a statement in writing why I, for one, cannot comply with the request it contains, and to repel the impression which appears to have existed in Mr. Sheridan's mind at the time that note was written. He insinuates that to some postponement of his interest, by the Committee, is owing the distressed situation in which he is unfortunately placed.

"Whatever postponement of the interests of the Proprietors may ultimately be resorted to, as matter of indispensable necessity from the state of the Subscription Fund, will originate in the written suggestion of Mr. Sheridan himself; and, in certain circumstances, unless such latitude were allowed on his part, the execution of the Act could not have been attempted.

"At present there is no postponement of his interest—but there is an utter impossibility of touching the Subscription Fund at all, except for very trifling specified articles, until a supplementary Act of Parliament shall have been obtained.

"By the present Act, even if the Subscription were full, and no impediments existed to the use of the money, the Act itself, and the incidental expenses of plans, surveys, etc. are first to be paid for,—then the portion of Killegrew's Patent,—then the claimants,—and *then* the Proprietors. Now the Act is not paid for: White and Martindale are not paid; and not one single claimant is paid, nor can any one of them *be* paid, until we have fresh powers and additional subscription.

"How then can Mr. Sheridan attribute to any postponement of his interests, actually made by the Committee, the present condition of his affairs? and why are we driven to these observations and explanations?

"We cannot but all deeply lament his distress, but the palliation he proposes it is not in our power to give.

"We cannot guarantee Mr. Hammersley upon the fund coming eventually to Mr. Sheridan. He alludes to the claims he has already created upon that fund. He must, besides, recollect the list of names he sent to me some time ago, of persons to whom he felt himself in honour bound to appropriate to each his share of that fund, in common

with others for whose names he left a blank, and who, he says in the same letter, have written engagements from him. Besides, he has communicated both to Mr. Taylor and to Mr. Shaw, through me, offers to impound the whole of the sum to answer the issue of the unsettled demands made upon him by those gentlemen respectively.

"How then can we guarantee Mr. Hammersley in the payment of any sum out of this fund, so circumstanced? Mr. Hammersley's possible profits are prospective, and the prospect remote. I know the positive losses he sustains, and the sacrifices he is obliged to make to procure the chance of the compromise he is willing to accept.

"Add to all this, that we are still struggling with difficulties which we may or may not overcome; that those difficulties are greatly increased by the persons whose interest and duty should equally lead them to give us every facility and assistance in the labours we have disinterestedly undertaken, and are determined faithfully to discharge. If we fail at last, from whatever cause, the whole vanishes.

"You know, my dear Sir, that I grieve for the sad state of Mr. Sheridan's affairs. I would contribute my mite to their temporary relief, if it would be acceptable; but as one of the Committee, intrusted with a public fund, I can do nothing. I cannot be a party to any claim upon Mr. Hammersley; and I utterly deny that, individually, or as part of the Committee, any step taken by me, or with my concurrence, has pressed upon the circumstances of Mr. Sheridan.

"I am,

"My dear Sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"*Southill, Dec.* 19, 1811. "SAMUEL WHITBREAD."

A Dissolution of Parliament being expected to take place, Mr. Sheridan again turned his eyes to Stafford; and, in spite of the estrangement to which his infidelities at Westminster had given rise, saw enough, he thought, of the "*veteris vestigia flammæ*" to encourage him to hope for a renewal of the connexion. The following letter to Sir Oswald Mosley explains his views and expectations on the subject: —

"*Cavendish-Square, Nov.* 29. 1811.

"DEAR SIR OSWALD,

"Being apprized that you have decided to decline offering yourself a candidate for Stafford, when a future election may arrive, — a place where you are highly esteemed, and where every humble service in my power, as I have before declared to you, should have been at your command, — I have determined to accept the very cordial invitations I have received from *old friends* in that quarter, and (though entirely secure of my seat at Ilchester, and, indeed, even of the second seat for my son, through the liberality of Sir W. Manners), to return to the old goal from whence I started thirty-one years since! You will easily see that arrangements at Ilchester may be made towards assisting me, in point of expense, to meet *any opposition*, and, *in that respect*, nothing will be *wanting*. It will,

I confess, be very gratifying to me to be again elected by *the sons of those* who chose me in the year *eighty*, and adhered to me so stoutly and so long. I think I was returned for Stafford seven, if not eight times, including two most tough and expensive contests; and, in taking a temporary leave of them I am sure my credit must stand well, for not a shilling did I leave unpaid. I have written to the Jerninghams, who, in the handsomest manner, have ever given me their warmest support; and as no political object interests my mind so much as the Catholic cause, I have no doubt that, independent of their personal friendship, I shall receive a continuation of their honourable support. I feel it to be no presumption to add, that other respectable interests in the neighbourhood will b ewith me.

"I need scarcely add my sanguine hope, that whatever interest rests with you (which ought to be much) will also be in my favour.

"I have the honour to be,

"With great esteem and regard,

"Yours most sincerely,

"R. B. SHERIDAN.

"I mean to be in Stafford from Lord G. Levison's in about a fortnight."

Among a number of notes addressed to his former constituents at this time, (which I find written in his neatest hand, as if *intended* to be sent,) is this curious one: —

"*Cavendish-Square, Sunday night*

"DEAR KING JOHN,

"I shall be in Stafford in the course of next week, and if your Majesty does not renew our old alliance, I shall never again have faith in any potentate on earth.

"Yours very sincerely,

"*Mr. John K.* "R. B SHERIDAN."

The two attempts that were made in the course of the year 1812 —the one, on the cessation of the Regency Restrictions, and the other after the assassination of Mr. Perceval,—to bring the Whigs into official relations with the Court, were, it is evident, but little inspired, on either side, with the feelings likely to lead to such a result. It requires but a perusal of the published correspondence, in both cases, to convince us that, at the bottom of all these evolutions of negotiation, there was any thing but a sincere wish that the object to which they related should be accomplished. The Maréchal Bassompière was not more afraid of succeeding in his warfare, when he said, "*Je crois que nous serons assez fous pour prendre la Rochelle*," than was one of the parties, at least, in these negotiations, of any favourable turn that might inflict success upon its overtures. Even where the Court—as in the contested point of the Household—professed its readiness to accede to the surrender so injudiciously demanded of it, those who acted as its discretionary

organs knew too well the real wishes in that quarter, and had been too long and faithfully zealous in their devotion to those wishes, to leave any fear that advantage would be taken of the concession. But, however high and chivalrous was the feeling with which Lord Moira, on this occasion, threw himself into the breach for his Royal Master, the service of Sheridan, though flowing partly from the same zeal, was not, I grieve to say, of the same clear and honourable character.

Lord Yarmouth, it is well known, stated in the House of Commons that he had communicated to Mr. Sheridan the intention of the Household to resign, with the view of having that intention conveyed to Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, and thus removing the sole ground upon which these Noble Lords objected to the acceptance of office. Not only, however, did Sheridan endeavour to dissuade the Noble Vice-Chamberlain from resigning, but, with an unfairness of dealing which admits, I own, of no vindication, he withheld from the two leaders of Opposition the intelligence thus meant to be conveyed to them; and, when questioned by Mr. Tierney as to the rumoured intentions of the Household to resign, offered to bet five hundred guineas that there was no such step in contemplation.

In this conduct, which he made but a feeble attempt to explain, and which I consider as the only indefensible part of his whole public life, he was, in some degree, no doubt, influenced by personal feelings against the two Noble Lords, whom his want of fairness on the occasion was so well calculated to thwart and embarrass. But the main motive of the whole proceeding is to be found in his devoted deference to what he knew to be the wishes and feelings of that Personage, who had become now, more than ever, the mainspring of all his movements,—whose spell over him, in this instance, was too strong for even his sense of character; and to whom he might well have applied the words of one of his own beautiful songs —

> "Friends, fortune, *fame itself* I'd lose,
> To gain one smile from thee!"

So fatal, too often, are Royal friendships, whose attraction, like the loadstone-rock in Eastern fable, that drew the nails out of the luckless ships that came near it, steals gradually away the strength by which character is held together, till, at last, it loosens at all points, and falls to pieces, a wreck!

In proof of the fettering influence under which he acted on this occasion, we find him, in one of his evasive attempts at vindication, suppressing, from delicacy to his Royal Master, a circumstance

which, if mentioned, would have redounded considerably to his own credit. After mentioning that the Regent had "asked his opinion with respect to the negotiations that were going on," he adds, "I gave him my opinion, and I most devoutly wish that that opinion could be published to the world, that it might serve to shame those who now belie me."

The following is the fact to which these expressions allude. When the Prince-Regent, on the death of Mr. Perceval, entrusted to Lord Wellesley the task of forming an Administration, it appears that His Royal Highness had signified either his intention or wish to exclude a certain Noble Earl from the arrangements to be made under that commission. On learning this, Sheridan not only expressed strongly his opinion against such a step, but having, afterwards, reason to fear that the freedom with which he spoke on the subject had been displeasing to the Regent, he addressed a letter to that Illustrious Person (a copy of which I have in my possession), in which, after praising the "wisdom and magnanimity" displayed by His Royal Highness, in confiding to Lord Wellesley the powers that had just been entrusted to him, he repeated his opinion, that any "proscription" of the Noble Earl in question would be "a proceeding equally derogatory to the estimation of His Royal Highness's personal dignity and the security of his political power;"—adding, that the advice, which he took the liberty of giving against such a step, did not proceed "from any peculiar partiality to the Noble Earl, or to many of those with whom he was allied; but was founded on what he considered to be best for His Royal Highness's honour and interest, and for the general interests of the country."

The letter (in alluding to the displeasure which he feared he had incurred by venturing this opinion) concludes thus:—

"Junius said in a public letter of his, addressed to Your Royal Father, 'the fate that made you a King forbad your having a friend.' I deny his proposition, as a general maxim—I am confident that Your Royal Highness possesses qualities to win and secure to you the attachment and devotion of private friendship, in spite of your being a Sovereign. At least I feel that I am entitled to make this declaration as far as relates to myself—and I do it under the assured conviction that you will never require from me any proof of that attachment and devotion inconsistent with the clear and honourable independence of mind and conduct, which constitute my sole value as a public man, and which have hitherto been my best recommendation to your gracious favour, confidence, and protection."

It is to be regretted that while by this wise advice he helped to save His Royal Master from the invidious *appearance* of acting

upon a principle of exclusion, he should, by his private management afterwards, have but too well contrived to secure to him all the advantage of that principle in *reality*.

The political career of Sheridan was now drawing fast to a close. He spoke but upon two or three other occasions during the Session; and among the last sentences uttered by him in the House were the following;—which, as calculated to leave a sweeter flavour on the memory, at parting, than those questionable transactions that have just been related, I have great pleasure in citing: —

"My objection to the present Ministry is, that they are avowedly arrayed and embodied against a principle,—that of concession to the Catholics of Ireland,—which I think, and must always think, essential to the safety of this empire. I will never give my vote to any Administration that opposes the question of Catholic Emancipation. I will not consent to receive a furlough upon that particular question, even though a Ministry were carrying every other that I wished. In fine, I think the situation of Ireland a paramount consideration. If they were to be the last words I should ever utter in this House, I should say, 'Be just to Ireland, as you value your own honour;—be just to Ireland, as you value your own peace.'"

His very last words in Parliament, on his own motion relative to the Overtures of Peace from France, were as follow: —

"Yet, after the general subjugation and ruin of Europe, should there ever exist an independent historian to record the awful events that produced this universal calamity, let that historian have to say,—'Great Britain fell, and with her fell all the best securities for the charities of human life, for the power and honour, the fame, the glory, and the liberties, not only of herself, but of the whole civilised world.'"

In the month of September following, Parliament was dissolved; and presuming upon the encouragement which he had received from some of his Stafford friends, he again tried his chance of election for that borough, but without success. This failure he himself imputed, as will be seen by the following letter, to the refusal of Mr. Whitbread to advance him 2000*l.* out of the sum due to him by the Committee for his share of the property: —

"Dear Whitbread, *Cook's Hotel, Nov.* 1, 1812.

"I was misled to expect you in town the beginning of last week, but being positively assured that you will arrive to-morrow, I have declined accompanying Hester into Hampshire as I intended, and she has gone to-day without me; but I must leave town to join her *as soon as I can*. We must have some serious, but yet, I hope, friendly conversation respecting my unsettled claims on the Drury-Lane Theatre Corporation. A concluding paragraph, in one of your last letters to Burgess, which he thought himself justified in showing me, leads me to believe that it is

not your object to distress or destroy me. On the subject of your refusing to advance to me the 2000*l.* I applied for to take with me to Stafford, out of the large sum confessedly due to me, (unless I signed some paper containing I know not what, and which you presented to my breast like a cocked pistol on the last day I saw you,) I will not dwell. *This, and this alone, lost me my election.* You deceive yourself if you give credit to any other causes, which the pride of my friends chose to attribute our failure to, rather than confess our poverty. I do not mean now to expostulate with you, much less to reproach you; but sure I am that when you contemplate the positive injustice of refusing me the accommodation I required, and the irreparable injury that refusal has cast on me, overturning, probably, all the honour and independence of what remains of my political life, you will deeply reproach yourself.

"I shall make an application to the Committee, when I hear you have appointed one, for the assistance which most pressing circumstances now compel me to call for; and all I desire is through a sincere wish that our friendship may not be interrupted, that the answer to that application may proceed from a *bonâ fide Committee, with their signatures*, testifying their decision.

"I am, yet,
"Yours very sincerely,

"*S. Whitbread, Esq.* "R. B. Sheridan."

Notwithstanding the angry feeling which is expressed in this letter, and which the state of poor Sheridan's mind, goaded as he was now by distress and disappointment, may well excuse, it will be seen by the following letter from Whitbread, written on the very eve of the elections in September, that there was no want of inclination, on the part of this honourable and excellent man, to afford assistance to his friend, — but that the duties of the perplexing trust which he had undertaken rendered such irregular advances as Sheridan required impossible: —

"My dear Sheridan,

"We will not enter into details, although you are quite mistaken in them. You know how happy I shall be to propose to the Committee to agree to any thing practicable; and you may make all practicable, if you will have resolution to look at the state of the account between you and the Committee, and agree to the mode of its liquidation.

"You will recollect the 5000*l.* pledged to Peter Moore to answer demands; the certificates given to Giblet, Ker, Ironmonger, Cross, and Hirdle, five each at your request; the engagements given to Ellis and myself, and the arrears to the Linley family. All this taken into consideration will leave a large balance still payable to you. Still there are upon that balance the claims upon you by Shaw, Taylor, and Grubb, for all of which you have offered to leave the whole of your compensation in my hands, to abide the issue of arbitration.

"This may be managed by your agreeing to take a considerable por-

tion of your balance in bonds, leaving those bonds in trust to answer the events.

"I shall be in town on Monday to the Committee, and will be prepared with a sketch of the state of your account with the Committee, and with the mode in which I think it would be prudent for you and them to adjust it; which if you will agree to, and direct the conveyance to be made forthwith, I will undertake to propose the advance of money you wish. But without a clear arrangement, as a justification, nothing can be done.

"I shall be in Dover-Street at nine o'clock, and be there and in Drury-Lane all day. The Queen comes, but the day is not fixed. The election will occupy me after Monday. After that is over, I hope we shall see you.

"Yours very truly,

"*Southill, Sept.* 25. 1812. "S. WHITBREAD."

The feeling entertained by Sheridan towards the Committee had already been strongly manifested this year by the manner in which Mrs. Sheridan received the Resolution passed by them, offering her the use of a box in the new Theatre. The notes of Whitbread to Mrs. Sheridan on this subject prove how anxious he was to conciliate the wounded feelings of his friend:—

"MY DEAR ESTHER,

"I have delayed sending the enclosed Resolution of the Drury-Lane Committee to you, because I had hoped to have found a moment to have called upon you, and to have delivered it into your hands. But I see no chance of that, and therefore literally obey my instructions in writing to you.

"I had great pleasure in proposing the Resolution, which was cordially and unanimously adopted. I had it always in contemplation,—but to have proposed it earlier would have been improper. I hope you will derive much amusement from your visits to the Theatre, and that you and all of your name will ultimately be pleased with what has been done. I have just had a most satisfactory letter from Tom Sheridan.

"I am,

"My dear Esther,

"Affectionately yours,

"*Dover-Street, July* 4. 1812 "SAMUEL WHITBREAD."

"MY DEAR ESTHER,

"It has been a great mortification and disappointment to me, to have met the Committee twice, since the offer of the use of a box at the new Theatre was made to you, and that I have not had to report the slightest acknowledgement from you in return.

"The Committee meet again to-morrow, and after that there will be no meeting for some time. If I shall be compelled to return the same blank answer I have hitherto done, the inference drawn will naturally be, that what was designed by myself, who moved it, and by those who voted it, as a gratifying mark of attention to Sheridan through you, (as

the most gratifying mode of conveying it,) has, for some unaccountable reason, been mistaken and is declined.

"But I shall be glad to know before to-morrow what is your determination on the subject.

"I am, dear Esther,

"Affectionately yours,

"*Dover-Street, July* 12. 1812. S. WHITBREAD."

The failure of Sheridan at Stafford completed his ruin. He was now excluded both from the Theatre and from Parliament: — the two anchors by which he held in life were gone, and he was left a lonely and helpless wreck upon the waters. The Prince Regent offered to bring him into Parliament; but the thought of returning to that scene of his triumphs and his freedom with the Royal owner's mark, as it were, upon him, was more than he could bear — and he declined the offer. Indeed, miserable and insecure as his life was now, when we consider the public humiliations to which he would have been exposed, between his ancient pledge to Whiggism and his attachment and gratitude to Royalty, it is not wonderful that he should have preferred even the alternative of arrests and imprisonments, to the risk of bringing upon his political name any further tarnish in such a struggle. Neither could his talents have much longer continued to do themselves justice, amid the pressure of such cares, and the increased indulgence of habits which, as is usual, gained upon him as all other indulgences vanished. The ancients, we are told, by a significant device, inscribed on the wreaths they wore at banquets the name of Minerva. Unfortunately, from the festal wreath of Sheridan this name was now but too often effaced; and the same charm, that once had served to give a quicker flow to thought, was now employed to muddy the stream, as it became painful to contemplate what was at the bottom of it. By exclusion, therefore, from Parliament, he was, perhaps, seasonably saved from affording to that Folly, which loves the martyrdom of Fame[1], the spectacle of a great mind, not only surviving itself, but, like the champion in Berni, continuing the combat after life is gone: —

"*Andava combattendo, ed era morto.*"

In private society, however, he could, even now, (before the Rubicon of the cup was passed,) fully justify his high reputation for agreeableness and wit; and a day which it was my good fortune to

[1] "And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame."

This fine line is in Lord Byron's Monody to his memory. There is another line, equally true and touching, where, alluding to the irregularities of the latter part of Sheridan's life, he says, —

"And what to them seem'd vice might be but woe."

spend with him, at the table of Mr. Rogers, has too many mournful, as well as pleasant, associations connected with it, to be easily forgotten by the survivors of the party. The company consisted but of Mr. Rogers himself, Lord Byron, Mr. Sheridan, and the writer of this Memoir. Sheridan knew the admiration his audience felt for him; the presence of the young poet in particular, seemed to bring back his own youth and wit; and the details he gave of his early life were not less interesting and animating to himself than delightful to us. It was in the course of this evening that, describing to us the poem which Mr. Whitbread had written and sent in, among the other Addresses for the opening of Drury-Lane, and which, like the rest, turned chiefly on allusions to the Phenix, he said,—"But Whitbread made more of this bird than any of them:—he entered into particulars, and described its wings, beak, tail, etc.; in short, it was a *Poulterer*'s description of a Phenix!"

The following extract from a Diary in my possession, kept by Lord Byron during six months of his residence in London, 1812-13, will show the admiration which this great and generous spirit felt for Sheridan:—

"*Saturday, December* 18. 1813.

"Lord Holland told me a curious piece of *sentimentality* in Sheridan. The other night we were all delivering our respective and various opinions on him and other '*hommes marquans*,' and mine was this:—Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy (School for Scandal) the *best* opera, (The Duenna—in my mind far before that St. Giles's lampoon, The Beggar's Opera,) the *best* farce, (The Critic—it is only too good for an after-piece,) and the *best* Address, (Monologue on Garrick,)—and, to crown all, delivered the very *best* oration (the famous Begum Speech) ever conceived or heard in this country.' Somebody told Sheridan this the next day, and, on hearing it, he burst into tears!—Poor Brinsley! If they were tears of pleasure, I would rather have said those few but sincere words, than have written the Iliad, or made his own celebrated Philippic. Nay, his own comedy never gratified me more than to hear that he had derived a moment's gratification from any praise of mine—humble as it must appear to 'my elders and my betters.'"

The distresses of Sheridan now increased every day, and through the short remainder of his life it is a melancholy task to follow him. The sum arising from the sale of his theatrical property was soon exhausted by the various claims upon it, and he was driven to part with all that he most valued, to satisfy further demands and provide for the subsistence of the day. Those books which, as I have already mentioned, were presented to him by various friends, now

stood, in their splendid bindings [1], on the shelves of the pawnbroker. The handsome cup, given him by the electors of Stafford, shared the same fate. Three or four fine pictures by Gainsborough, and one by Morland, were sold for little more than five hundred pounds[2]; and even the precious portrait of his first wife [3] by Reynolds, though not actually sold during his life, vanished away from his eyes into other hands.

One of the most humiliating trials of his pride was yet to come. In the spring of this year he was arrested and carried to a spunging-house, where he remained two or three days. This abode, from which the following painful letter to Whitbread was written, formed a sad contrast to those Princely halls, of which he had so lately been the most brilliant and favoured guest, and which were possibly, at that very moment, lighted up and crowded with gay company, unmindful of him within those prison walls:

"*Tooke's Court, Cursitor-Street, Thursday, past two.*

"I have done every thing in my power with the solicitors, White and Fownes, to obtain my release, by substituting a better security for them than their detaining me—but in vain.

"Whitbread, putting all false professions of friendship and feeling out of the question, you have no right to keep me here!—for it is in truth *your* act—if you had not forcibly withheld from me the *twelve thousand pounds*, in consequence of a threatening letter from a miserable swindler, whose claim YOU in particular knew to *be a lie*, I should at least have been out of the reach of *this* state of miserable insult,—for that, and that only lost me my seat in Parliament. And I assert that you cannot find a lawyer in the land, that is not either a natural-born fool or a corrupted scoundrel, who will not declare that your conduct in this respect was neither warrantable or legal—but let that pass *for the present*.

[1] In most of them, too, were the names of the givers. The delicacy with which Mr. Harrison of Wardour-Street (the pawnbroker with whom the books and the cup were deposited) behaved, after the death of Mr. Sheridan, deserves to be mentioned with praise. Instead of availing himself of the public feeling at that moment, by submitting these precious relics to the competition of a sale, he privately communicated to the family and one or two friends of Sheridan the circumstance of his having such articles in his hands, and demanded nothing more than the sum regularly due on them.—The Stafford cup is in the possession of Mr. Charles Sheridan.

[2] In the following extract from a note to his solicitor, he refers to these pictures:

"Dear Burgess,

"I am perfectly satisfied with your account;—nothing can be more clear or fair, or more disinterested on your part;—but I must grieve to think that five or six hundred pounds for my poor pictures are added to the expenditure. However, we shall come through!"

[3] As Saint Cecilia. The portrait of Mrs. Sheridan at Knowle, though less ideal than that of Sir Joshua, is (for this very reason, perhaps, as bearing a closer resemblance to the original,) still more beautiful.

"Independently of the 1000*l.* ignorantly withheld from me on the day of considering my last claim, I require of you to answer the draft I send herewith on the part of the Committee, pledging myself to prove to them on the first day I can *personally* meet them, that there are still thousands and thousands due to me, both legally and equitably, from the Theatre. My word ought to be taken on this subject; and you may produce to them this document, if one among them could think that, under all the circumstances, your conduct required a justification. O God! with what mad confidence have I trusted *your word*—I ask *justice* from you, and *no boon*. I enclosed you yesterday three different securities, which, had you been disposed to have acted even as a private friend, would have made it *certain* that you might have done so *without the smallest risk*. These you discreetly offered to put into the fire, when you found the object of your humane visit satisfied by seeing me safe in prison.

"I shall only add, that, I think, if I know myself, had our lots been reversed, and I had seen you in my situation, and had left Lady E. in that of my wife, I would have risked 600*l.* rather than have left you so—although I had been in no way accessary in bringing you into that condition.

"*S. Whitbread, Esq.* "R. B. SHERIDAN."

Even in this situation the sanguineness of his disposition did not desert him; for he was found by Mr. Whitbread, on his visit to the spunging-house, confidently calculating on the representation for Westminster, in which proceedings relative to Lord Cochrane at that moment promised a vacancy. On his return home, however, to Mrs. Sheridan (some arrangements having been made by Whitbread for his release,) all his fortitude forsook him, and he burst into a long and passionate fit of weeping at the profanation, as he termed it, which his person had suffered.

He had for some months had a feeling that his life was near its close; and I find the following touching passage in a letter from him to Mrs. Sheridan, after one of those differences which will sometimes occur between the most affectionate companions, and which, possibly, a remonstrance on his irregularities and want of care of himself occasioned: — "Never again let one harsh word pass between us during the period, which may not perhaps be long, that we are in this world together, and life, however clouded to me, is mutually spared to us. I have expressed this same sentiment to my son, in a letter I wrote to him a few days since, and I had his answer—a most affecting one, and, I am sure, very sincere—and have since cordially embraced him. Don't imagine that I am expressing an interesting apprehension about myself which I do not feel."

Though the new Theatre of Dury-Lane had now been three years built, his feelings had never allowed him to set his foot within its

walls. About this time, however, he was persuaded by his friend, Lord Essex, to dine with him, and go in the evening to His Lordship's box, to see Kean. Once there, the "*genius loci*" seems to have regained its influence over him; for, on missing him from the box, between the Acts, Lord Essex, who feared that he had left the House, hastened out to enquire, and, to his great satisfaction, found him installed in the Green-room, with all the actors around him, welcoming him back to the old region of his glory, with a sort of filial cordiality. Wine was immediately ordered, and a bumper to the health of Mr. Sheridan was drank by all present, with the expression of many a hearty wish that he would often, very often, re-appear among them. This scene, as was natural, exhilarated his spirits, and, on parting with Lord Essex that night, at his own door in Saville-Row, he said triumphantly that the world would soon hear of him, for the Duke of Norfolk was about to bring him into Parliament. This, it appears was actually the case; but Death stood near as he spoke. In a few days after, his last fatal illness began.

Amid all the distresses of these latter years of his life, he appears but rarely to have had recourse to pecuniary assistance from friends. Mr. Peter Moore, Mr. Ironmonger, and one or two others, who did more for the comfort of his decline than any of his high and noble associates, concur in stating that, except for such an occasional trifle as his coach-hire; he was by no means, as has been sometimes asserted, in the habit of borrowing. One instance, however, where he laid himself under this sort of obligation, deserves to be mentioned. Soon after the return of Mr. Canning from Lisbon, a letter was put into his hands, in the House of Commons, which proved to be a request from his old friend Sheridan, then lying ill in bed, that he would oblige him with the loan of a hundred pounds. It is unnecesssary to say that the request was promptly and feelingly complied with; — and if the pupil has ever regretted leaving the politics of his master, it was not at *that* moment, at least, such a feeling was likely to present itself.

There are, in the possession of a friend of Sheridan, copies of a correspondence in which he was engaged this year with two noble Lords and the confidential agent of an illustrious Personage, upon a subject, as it appears, of the utmost delicacy and importance. The letters of Sheridan, it is said, (for I have not seen them,) though of too secret and confidential a nature to meet the public eye, not only prove the great confidence reposed in him by the parties concerned, but show the clearness and manliness of mind which he could still command, under the pressure of all that was most trying to human intellect.

The disorder, with which he was now attacked, arose from a diseased state of the stomach, brought on partly by irregular living, and partly by the harassing anxieties that had, for so many years, without intermission, beset him. His powers of digestion grew every day worse, till he was at length unable to retain any sustenance. Notwithstanding this, however, his strength seemed to be but little broken, and his pulse remained for some time, strong and regular. Had he taken, indeed, but ordinary care of himself through life, the robust conformation of his frame, and particularly, as I have heard his physician remark, the peculiar width and capaciousness of his chest, seemed to mark him out for a long course of healthy existence. In general Nature appears to have a prodigal delight in inclosing her costliest essences in the most frail and perishable vessels: —but Sheridan was a signal exception to this remark; for, with a spirit so "finely touched," he combined all the robustness of the most uninspired clay.

Mrs. Sheridan was, at first, not aware of his danger; but Dr. Bain—whose skill was now, as it ever had been, disinterestedly at the service of his friend,[1]—thought it right to communicate to her the apprehensions that he felt. From that moment, her attentions to the sufferer never ceased day or night; and, though drooping herself with an illness that did not leave her long behind him, she watched over his every word and wish, with unremitting anxiety, to the last.

Connected, no doubt, with the disorganisation of his stomach was an abscess, from which, though distressingly situated, he

[1] A letter from Sheridan to this amiable man, (of which I know not the date,) written in reference to a caution which he had given Mrs. Sheridan, against sleeping in the same bed with a lady who was consumptive, expresses feelings creditable alike to the writer and his physician:—

"My dear Sir, *July* 31.

"The caution you recommend proceeds from that attentive kindness which Hester always receives from you, and upon which I place the greatest reliance for her safety. I so entirely agree with your apprehensions on the subject, that I think it was very giddy in me not to have been struck with them when she first mentioned having stept with her friend. Nothing can abate my love for her: and the manner in which you apply the interest you take in her happiness, and direct the influence you possess in her mind, render you, beyond comparison, the person I feel most obliged to upon earth. I take this opportunity of saying this upon paper, because it is a subject on which I always find it difficult to speak.

"With respect to that part of your note in which you express such friendly partiality, as to my parliamentary conduct, I need not add that there is no man whose good opinion can be more flattering to me.

"I am ever, my dear Bain,

"Your sincere and obliged

"R. B. Sheridan."

does not appear to have suffered much pain. In the spring of this year, however, he was obliged to confine himself, almost entirely, to his bed. Being expected to attend the St. Patrick's Dinner, on the 17th of March, he wrote a letter to the Duke of Kent, who was President, alleging severe indisposition as the cause of his absence. The contents of this letter were communicated to the company, and produced, as appears by the following note from the Duke of Kent, a strong sensation :—

" *Kensington Palace, March* 27, 1816.

" My Dear Sheridan,

" I have been so hurried ever since St. Patrick's day, as to be unable earlier to thank you for your kind letter, which I received while presiding at the festive board; but I can assure you, I was not unmindful of it *then*, but announced the afflicting cause of your absence to the company, who expressed, in a manner that could not be *misunderstood*, their continued affection for the writer of it. It now only remains for me to assure you, that I appreciate as I ought the sentiments of attachment it contains for me, and which will ever be most cordially returned by him, who is with the most friendly regard, my dear Sheridan,

" Yours faithfully,

" *The Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.* " Edward."

The following letter to him at this time from his elder sister will be read with interest :—

" My dear Brother, *Dublin, May* 9, 1816.

" I am very, very sorry you are ill; but I trust in God your naturally strong constitution will retrieve all, and that I shall soon have the satisfaction of hearing that you are in a fair way of recovery. I well know the nature of your complaint, that it is extremely painful, but if properly treated, and no doubt you have the best advice, not dangerous. I know a lady now past seventy-four, who many years since was attacked with a similar complaint, and is now as well as most persons of her time of life. Where poulticing is necessary, I have known oatmeal used with the best effect. Forgive, dear brother, this officious zeal. Your son Thomas told me he felt obliged to me for not prescribing for him. I did not, because in his case I thought it would be ineffectual; in yours I have reason to hope the contrary. I am very glad to hear of the good effect change of climate has made in him :—I took a great liking to him; there was something kind in his manner that won upon my affections. Of your son Charles I hear the most delightful accounts :—that he has an excellent and cultivated understanding, and a heart as good. May he be a blessing to you, and a compensation for much you have endured! That I do not know him, that I have not seen you, (so early and so long the object of my affection,) for so many years, has not been my fault; but I have ever considered it as a drawback upon a situation not otherwise unfortunate; for, to use the words of Goldsmith, I have endeavoured to " draw upon

content for the deficiencies of fortune;" and truly I have had some employment in that way, for considerable have been our worldly disappointments. But those are not the worst evils of life, and we have good children, which is its first blessing. I have often told you my son Tom bore a strong resemblance to you, when I loved you preferably to any thing the world contained. This, which was the case with him in childhood and early youth, is still so in mature years. In character of mind, too, he is very like you, though education and situation have made a great difference. At that period of existence, when the temper, morals, and propensities are formed, Tom had a mother who watched over his health, his well-being, and every part of education in which a female could be useful. Lor had lost a mother who would have cherished you whose talents you inherited, who would have softened the asperity of our father's temper, and probably have prevented his unaccountable partialities. You have always shown a noble independence of spirit, that the pecuniary difficulties you often had to encounter could not induce you to forego. As a public man, you have been, like the motto of the Lefanu family, "*Sine macula*;" and I am persuaded had you not too early been thrown upon the world, and alienated from your family, you would have been equally good as a private character. My son is eminently so. * * *

"Do, dear brother, send me one line to tell me you are better, and believe me, most affectionately,

"Yours,

"Alicia Lefanu."

While death was thus gaining fast on Sheridan, the miseries of his life were thickening round him also; nor did the last corner, in which he now lay down to die, afford him any asylum from the clamours of his legal pursuers. Writs and executions came in rapid succession, and bailiffs at length gained possession of his house. It was about the beginning of May that Lord Holland, on being informed by Mr. Rogers (who was one of the very few that watched the going out of this great light with interest) of the dreary situation in which his old friend was lying, paid him a visit one evening, in company with Mr. Rogers, and by the cordiality, suavity, and cheerfulness of his conversation, shed a charm round that chamber of sickness, which, perhaps, no other voice but his own could have imparted.

Sheridan was, I believe, sincerely attached to Lord Holland, in whom he saw transmitted the same fine qualities, both of mind and heart, which, notwithstanding occasional appearances to the contrary, he had never ceased to love and admire in his great relative; — the same ardour for Right and impatience of Wrong—the same mixture of wisdom and simplicity, so tempering each other, as to make the simplicity refined and the wisdom unaffected—the same gentle magnanimity of spirit, intolerant only of tyranny and injustice—and, in addition to all this, a range and vivacity of conversa-

lion, entirely his own, which leaves no subject untouched or unadorned, but is (to borrow a fancy of Dryden), "as the Morning of the Mind," bringing new objects and images successively into view, and scattering its own fresh light over all. Such a visit, therefore, could not fail to be soothing and gratifying to Sheridan; and, on parting, both Lord Holland and Mr. Rogers comforted him with the assurance, that some steps should be taken to ward off the immediate evils that he dreaded.

An evening or two after (Wednesday, May 15.) I was with Mr. Rogers, when, on returning home, he found the following afflicting note upon his table:—

"*Saville-Row.*

"I find things settled so that 150*l.* will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the Plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Fairbrother to get back the Guarantee for thirty.

"They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*—for God's sake let me see you.

"R. B. S."

It was too late to do any thing when this note was received, being then between twelve and one at night; but Mr. Rogers and I walked down to Saville-Row together, to assure ourselves that the threatened arrest had not yet been put in execution. A servant spoke to us out of the area, and said that all was safe for the night, but that it was intended, in pursuance of this new proceeding, to paste bills over the front of the house next day.

On the following morning I was early with Mr. Rogers, and willingly undertook to be the bearer of a draft for 150*l.*[1] to Saville-Row. I found Mr. Sheridan good-natured and cordial as ever; and, though he was then within a few weeks of his death, his voice had not lost its fulness or strength, nor was that lustre, for which his eyes were so remarkable, diminished. He showed, too, his usual sanguineness of disposition in speaking of the price that he expected for his Dramatic Works, and of the certainty he felt of being able to arrange all his affairs, if his complaint would but suffer him to leave his bed.

In the following month, his powers began rapidly to fail him; —his stomach was completely worn out, and could no longer bear any kind of sustenance. During the whole of this time, as far as I can learn, it does not appear that (with the exceptions I have

[1] Lord Holland afterwards insisted upon paying the half of this sum,—which was not the first of the same amount that my liberal friend, Mr. Rogers, had advanced for Sheridan.

mentioned) any one of his Noble or Royal friends ever called at his door, or even sent to enquire after him!

About this period Doctor Bain received the following note from Mr. Vaughan :—

"My dear Sir,

"An apology in a case of humanity is scarcely necessary, besides I have the honor of a slight acquaintance with you. A friend of mine, hearing of *our friend* Sheridan's forlorn situation, and that he has neither money or credit for a few comforts, has employed me to convey a small sum for his use, through such channel as I think right. I can devise none better than through you. If I had had the good fortune to have seen you, I should have left for this purpose a draft for 50*l*. Perhaps as much more might be had if it will be conducive to a good end—of course you must feel it is not for the purpose of satisfying troublesome people. I will say more to you if you will do me the honor of a call in your way to Saville-Street to-morrow. I am a mere agent.

"I am,

"My dear Sir,

"Most truly yours,

"25. *Grafton Street.* "John Taylor Vaughan.

"If I should not see you before twelve, I will come through the passage to you."

In his interview with Doctor Bain, Mr. Vaughan stated, that the sum thus placed at his disposal was, in all, 200*l*.[2]; and the proposition being submitted to Mrs. Sheridan, that lady, after consulting with some of her relatives, returned for answer that, as there was a sufficiency of means to provide all that was necessary for her husband's comfort, as well as her own, she begged leave to decline the offer.

Mr. Vaughan always said, that the donation, thus meant to be doled out, came from a Royal hand;—but this is hardly credible. It would be safer, perhaps, to let the suspicion rest upon that gentleman's memory, of having indulged his own benevolent disposition in this disguise, than to suppose it possible that so scanty and reluctant a benefaction was the sole mark of attention accorded by a "gracious Prince and Master" to the last death-bed wants of one of the most accomplished and faithful servants that Royalty ever yet raised or ruined by its smiles. When the philosopher Anaxagoras lay dying for want of sustenance, his great pupil, Pericles,

[1] Mr. Vaughan did not give Doctor Bain to understand that he was authorised to go beyond the 200*l*.; but, in a conversation which I had with him a year or two after, in contemplation of this Memoir, he told me that a further supply was intended.

[2] See Sheridan's Letter, vol. ii, page 429.

sent him a sum of money. "Take it back," said Anaxagoras—"if he wished to keep the lamp alive, he ought to have administered the oil before!"

In the mean time, the clamours and incursions of creditors increased. A sheriff's officer at length arrested the dying man in his bed, and was about to carry him off, in his blankets, to a spunging-house, when Doctor Bain interfered—and, by threatening the officer with the responsibility he must incur, if, as was but too probable, his prisoner should expire on the way, averted this outrage.

About the middle of June, the attention and sympathy of the Public were, for the first time, awakened to the desolate situation of Sheridan, by an article that appeared in the Morning Post,—written, as I understand, by a gentleman, who, though on no very cordial terms with him, forgot every other feeling in a generous pity for his fate, and in honest indignation against those who now deserted him. "Oh delay not," said the writer, without naming the person to whom he alluded—"delay not to draw aside the curtain within which that proud spirit hides its sufferings." He then adds, with a striking anticipation of what afterwards happened:—"Prefer ministering in the chamber of sickness to mustering at

'The splendid sorrows that adorn the hearse;'

I say, *Life* and *Succour* against Westminster-Abbey and a Funeral!"

This article produced a strong and general sensation, and was reprinted in the same paper the following day. Its effect, too, was soon visible in the calls made at Sheridan's door, and in the appearance of such names as the Duke of York, the Duke of Argyle, etc., among the visitors. But it was now too late;—the spirit, that these unavailing tributes might once have comforted, was now fast losing the consciousness of every thing earthly, but pain. After a succession of shivering fits, he fell into a state of exhaustion, in which he continued, with but few more signs of suffering, till his death. A day or two before that event, the Bishop of London read prayers by his bedside; and on Sunday, the seventh of July, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, he died.

On the following Saturday the Funeral took place;—his remains having been previously removed from Saville-Row to the house of his friend, Mr. Peter Moore, in Great George-Street, Westminster. From thence, at one o'clock, the procession moved on foot to the Abbey, where, in the only spot in Poet's Corner that remained unoccupied, the body was interred; and the following simple inscription marks its resting-place:—

"RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

BORN, 1751,

DIED, 7th JULY, 1816.

THIS MARBLE IS THE TRIBUTE OF AN ATTACHED

FRIEND,

PETER MOORE."

Seldom has there been seen such an array of rank as graced this Funeral [1]. The Pall-bearers were the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Lauderdale, Earl Mulgrave, the Lord Bishop of London, Lord Holland, and Lord Spencer. Among the mourners were His Royal Highness the Duke of York, His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, the Duke of Argyle, the Marquisses of Anglesea and Tavistock; the Earls of Thanet, Jersey, Harrington, Besborough, Mexborough, Rosslyn, and Yarmouth; Lords George Cavendish and Robert Spencer; Viscounts Sidmouth, Granville, and Duncannon; Lords Rivers, Erskine, and Lynedoch; the Lord Mayor; Right Hon. G. Canning and W. W. Pole, etc., etc. [2].

Where were they all, these Royal and Noble persons, who now crowded to "partake the gale" of Sheridan's glory—where were they all, while any life remained in him? Where were they all, but a few weeks before, when their interposition might have saved his heart from breaking,—or when the zeal, now wasted on the grave might have soothed and comforted the death-bed? This is a subject on which it is difficult to speak with patience. If the man was unworthy of the commonest offices of humanity while he lived, why all this parade of regret and homage over his tomb?

There appeared some verses at the time, which, however intemperate in their satire and careless in their style, came, evidently, warm from the heart of the writer, and contained sentiments to which, even in his cooler moments, he needs not hesitate to subscribe:—

"Oh it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And friendships so false in the great and highborn;—
To think what a long line of Titles may follow
The relics of him who died, friendless and lorn!

[1] It was well remarked by a French Journal, in contrasting the penury of Sheridan's latter years with the splendour of his Funeral, that "France is the place for a man of letters to live in, and England the place for him to die in."

[2] In the train of all this phalanx of Dukes, Marquisses, Earls, Viscounts, Barons, Honourables, and Right Honourables, Princes of the Blood Royal, and First Officers of the State, it was not a little interesting to see, walking humbly, side by side, the only two men whose friendship had not waited for the call of vanity to display itself—Dr Bain and Mr. Rogers.

" How proud they can press to the funeral array
Of him whom they shunn'd, in his sickness and sorrow—
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by Nobles to morrow!"

The anonymous writer thus characterises the talents of Sheridan :—

" Was this, then, the fate of that high-gifted man,
The pride of the palace, the bower, and the hall—
The orator, dramatist, minstrel,—who ran
Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all?

" Whose mind was an essence, compounded with art,
From the finest and best of all other men's powers;—
Who rul'd, like a wizard, the world of the heart,
And could call up its sunshine, or draw down its showers;—

" Whose humour, as gay as the fire-fly's light,
Play'd round every subject, and shone as it play'd;—
Whose wit, in the combat as gentle as bright,
Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade;—

" Whose eloquence, brightening whatever it tried,
Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave,
Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide,
As ever bore Freedom aloft on its wave!"

Though a perusal of the foregoing pages has, I trust, sufficiently furnished the reader with materials out of which to form his own estimate of the character of Sheridan, a few general remarks may, at parting, be allowed me—rather with a view to convey the impressions left upon myself, than with any presumptuous hope of influencing the deductions of others.

In considering the intellectual powers of this extraordinary man, the circumstance that first strikes us is the very scanty foundation of instruction, upon which he contrived to raise himself to such eminence both as a writer and a politician. It is true, in the line of authorship he pursued, erudition was not so much wanting; and his wit, like the laurel of Cæsar, was leafy enough to hide any bareness in this respect. In politics, too, he had the advantage of entering upon his career, at a time when habits of business and a knowledge of details were less looked for in public men than they are at present, and when the House of Commons was, for various reasons, a more open play-ground for eloquence and wit. The great increase of public business since then, has necessarily made a considerable change in this respect. Not only has the time of the Legislature become too precious to be wasted upon the mere gymnastics of rhetoric, but even those graces, with which true Oratory surrounds her statements, are but impatiently borne, where the statement itself is the primary and pressing object of

the hearer'. Burke, we know, was, even for his own time, too much addicted to what falconers would call *raking*, or flying wide of his game; but there was hardly, perhaps, one among his great contemporaries, who, if beginning his career at present, would not find it, in some degree, necessary to conform his style to the taste for business and matter-of-fact that is prevalent. Mr. Pitt would be compelled to curtail the march of his sentences—Mr. Fox would learn to repeat himself less lavishly—nor would Mr. Sheridan venture to enliven a question of evidence by a long and pathetic appeal to Filial Piety.

In addition to this change in the character and taste of the House of Commons, which, while it has lowered the value of some of the qualifications possessed by Sheridan, has created a demand for others of a more useful, but less splendid kind, which his education and habits of life would have rendered less easily attainable by him, we must take also into account the prodigious difference produced by the general movement, at present, of the whole civilised world towards knowledge;—a movement which no public man, however great his natural talents, could now lag behind with impunity, and which requires nothing less than the versatile and *encyclopædic* powers of a Brougham to keep pace with it.

Another striking characteristic of Sheridan, as an orator and a writer, was the great degree of labour and preparation which his productions in both lines cost him. Of this the reader has seen some curious proofs in the preceding pages. Though the papers left behind by him have added nothing to the stock of his *chefs-d'œuvre*, they have given us an insight into his manner of producing his great works, which is, perhaps, the next most interesting thing to the works themselves. Though no new star has been discovered, the history of the formation of those we already possess, and of the

[1] The new light that has been thrown on Political Science may also, perhaps, be assigned as a reason for this evident revolution in Parliamentary taste. "Truth," says Lord Bacon, "is a naked and open day-light, that doth not show the masques, and mummeries, and triumphs of the present world half so stately and daintily as candlelights;"—and there can be little doubt that the clearer any important truths are made, the less controversy they will excite among fair and rational men, and the less passion and fancy, accordingly, can eloquence infuse into the discussion of them. Mathematics have produced no quarrels among mankind—it is by the mysterious and the vague, that temper as well as imagination is most roused. In proof of this, while the acknowledged clearness, almost to truism, which the leading principles of Political Science have attained, has tended to simplify and tame down the activities of eloquence on that subject, there is still another arena left, in the science of the Law, where the same illumination of truth has not yet penetrated, and where Oratory will still continue to work her perplexing spells, till Common Sense and the plain principles of Utility shall find their way there also to weaken them.

gradual process by which they were brought "firm to retain their gathered beams," has, as in the instance of The School for Scandal, been most interestingly unfolded to us.

The same marks of labour are discoverable throughout the whole of his Parliamentary career. He never made a speech of any moment, of which the sketch, more or less detailed, has not been found among his papers — with the showier passages generally written two or three times over (often without any material change in their form) upon small detached pieces of paper, or on cards. To such minutiæ of effect did he attend, that I have found, in more than one instance, a memorandum made of the precise place in which the words "Good God, Mr. Speaker," were to be introduced. These preparatory sketches are continued down to his latest displays; and it is observable that when, from the increased derangement of his affairs, he had no longer leisure or collectedness enough to prepare, he ceased to speak.

The only time he could have found for this pre-arrangement of his thoughts (of which few, from the apparent idleness of his life, suspected him) must have been during the many hours of the day that he remained in bed,—when, frequently, while the world gave him credit for being asleep, he was employed in laying the framework of his wit and eloquence for the evening.

That this habit of premeditation was not altogether owing to a want of quickness appears from the power and liveliness of his replies in Parliament, and the vivacity of some of his retorts in conversation[1]. The labour, indeed, which he found necessary for his public displays was, in a great degree, the combined effect of his ignorance and his taste;—the one rendering him fearful of committing himself on the *matter* of his task, and the other making him fastidious and hesitating as to the *manner* of it. I cannot help thinking, however, that there must have been also a degree of natural slowness in the first movements of his mind upon any topic; and that, like

[1] His best *bons mots* are in the memory of every one. Among those less known, perhaps, is his answer to General T——, relative to some difference of opinion between them on the War in Spain:—"Well, T——, are you still on your high horse?"—"If I was on a horse before, I am upon an elephant now."—"No, T——, you were upon an *ass* before, and now you are upon a *mule*."

Some mention having been made in his presence of a Tax upon Mile-stones, Sheridan said, "such a tax would be unconstitutional;—as they were a race that could not meet to remonstrate."

As an instance of his humour, I have been told that, in some country-house where he was on a visit, an elderly maiden lady having set her heart on being his companion in a walk, he excused himself at first on account of the badness of the weather. Soon afterwards, however, the lady intercepted him in an attempt to escape without her:—"Well," she said, "it has cleared up, I see."—"Why, yes," he answered, "it has cleared up enough for *one*, but not for *two*."

those animals which remain gazing upon their prey before they seize it, he found it necessary to look intently at his subject for some time, before he was able to make the last, quick spring that mastered it.

Among the proofs of this dependence of his fancy upon time and thought for its development, may be mentioned his familiar letters, as far as their fewness enables us to judge. Had his wit been a "fruit, that would fall without shaking," we should, in these communications at least, find some casual windfalls of it. But, from the want of sufficient time to search and cull, he seems to have given up, in despair, all thoughts of being lively in his letters; and, accordingly, as the reader must have observed in the specimens that have been given, his compositions in this way are not only unenlivened by any excursions beyond the bounds of mere matter of fact, but, from the habit or necessity of taking a certain portion of time for correction, are singularly confused, disjointed, and inelegant in their style.

It is certain that even his *bons mots* in society were not always to be set down to the credit of the occasion; but that, frequently, like skilful priests, he prepared the miracle of the moment beforehand. Nothing, indeed, could be more remarkable than the patience and tact, with which he would wait through a whole evening for the exact moment when the shaft, which he had ready feathered, might be let fly with effect. There was no effort, either obvious or disguised, to lead to the subject—no "question detached (as he himself expresses it) to draw you into the ambuscade of his ready-made joke"—and, when the lucky moment *did* arrive, the natural and accidental manner, in which he would let this treasured sentence fall from his lips, considerably added to the astonishment and the charm. So bright a thing, produced so easily, seemed like the delivery of Wieland's[1] Amanda in a dream;—and his own apparent unconsciousness of the value of what he said might have deceived dull people into the idea that there was really nothing in it.

The consequence of this practice of waiting for the moment of effect was (as all, who have been much in his society, must have observed,) that he would remain inert in conversation, and even taciturn, for hours, and then suddenly come out with some brilliant sally, which threw a light over the whole evening, and was carried away in the memories of all present. Nor must it be supposed that in the intervals, either before or after these flashes, he ceased to be agreeable; on the contrary, he had a grace and good nature in his manner, which gave a charm to even his most ordinary

[1] See Sotheby's admirable Translation of Oberon.

sayings, and there was, besides, that ever-speaking lustre in his eye, which made it impossible, even when he was silent, to forget who he was.

A curious instance of the care with which he treasured up the felicities of his wit appears in the use he made of one of those epigrammatic passages, which the reader may remember among the memorandums for his Comedy of Affectation, and which, in its first form, ran thus:—"He certainly has a great deal of fancy, and a very good memory; but with a perverse ingenuity, he employs these qualities as no other person does—for he employs his fancy in his narratives, and keeps his recollection for his wit:—when he makes his jokes, you applaud the accuracy of his memory, and 'tis only when he states his facts that you admire the flights of his imagination." After many efforts to express this thought more concisely, and to reduce the language of it to that condensed and elastic state, in which alone it gives force to the projectiles of wit, he kept the passage by him patiently some years,—till he at length found an opportunity of turning it to account, in a reply, I believe, to Mr. Dundas, in the House of Commons, when, with the most extemporaneous air, he brought it forth, in the following compact and pointed form:—"The Right Honourable Gentleman is indebted to his memory for his jests, and to his imagination for his facts."

His Political Character stands out so fully in these pages, that it is needless, by any comments, to attempt to raise it into stronger relief. If to watch over the Rights of the Subject, and guard them against the encroachments of Power, be, even in safe and ordinary times, a task full of usefulness and honour, how much more glorious to have stood sentinel over the same sacred trust, through a period so trying as that with which Sheridan had to struggle—when Liberty itself had become suspected and unpopular—when Authority had succeeded in identifying patriotism with treason, and when the few remaining and deserted friends of Freedom were reduced to take their stand on a narrowing isthmus, between Anarchy on one side and the angry incursions of Power on the other. How manfully he maintained his ground in a position so critical, the annals of England and of the Champions of her Constitution will long testify. The truly national spirit, too, with which, when that struggle was past, and the dangers to liberty from without seemed greater than any from within, he forgot all past differences in the one common cause of Englishmen, and, while others "gave but the *left* hand to the Country,[1]" proffered her *both* of

[1] His own words.

his, stamped a seal of sincerity on his public conduct which, in the eyes of all England, authenticated it as genuine patriotism.

To his own party, it is true, his conduct presented a very different phasis; and if implicit partisanship were the sole merit of a public man, his movements, at this and other junctures, were far too independent and unharnessed to lay claim to it. But, however useful may be the bond of Party, there are occasions that supersede it; and, in all such deviations from the fidelity which it enjoins, the two questions to be asked are—were they, as regarded the Public, right? were they, as regarded the individual himself, unpurchased? To the former question, in the instance of Sheridan, the whole country responded in the affirmative; and to the latter, his account with the Treasury, from first to last, is a sufficient answer.

Even, however, on the score of fidelity to Party, when we recollect that he more than once submitted to some of the worst martyrdoms which it imposes—that of sharing in the responsibility of opinions from which he dissented, and suffering by the ill-consequences of measures against which he had protested;—when we call to mind, too, that during the Administration of Mr. Addington, though agreeing wholly with the Ministry and differing with the Whigs, he even then refused to profit by a position so favorable to his interests, and submitted, like certain religionists, from a point of honour, to suffer for a faith in which he did not believe—it seems impossible not to concede that even to the obligations of Party he was as faithful as could be expected from a spirit that so far outgrew its limits, and, in paying the tax of fidelity while he asserted the freedom of dissent, showed that he could sacrifice every thing to it, except his opinion. Through all these occasional variations, too, he remained a genuine Whig to the last; and, as I have heard one of his own party happily express it, was "like pure gold, that changes colour in the fire, but comes out unaltered."

The transaction in 1812, relative to the Household, was, as I have already said, the least defensible part of his public life. But it should be recollected how broken he was, both in mind and body, at that period;—his resources from the Theatre at an end, —the shelter of Parliament about to be taken from over his head also,—and old age and sickness coming on, as every hope and comfort vanished. In that wreck of all around him, the friendship of Carlton-House was the last asylum left to his pride and his hope: and that even character itself should, in a too zealous moment, have been one of the sacrifices offered up at the shrine that protected him, is a subject more of deep regret than of wonder. The poet

Cowley, in speaking of the unproductiveness of those pursuits connected with Wit and Fancy, says beautifully—

"Where such fairies once have danc'd, no grass will ever grow;"

but, unfortunately, thorns *will* grow there;—and he who walks unsteadily among such horns as now beset the once enchanted path of Sheridan, ought not, after all, to be very severely criticised.

His social qualities were, unluckily for himself, but too attractive. In addition to his powers of conversation, there was a well-bred good-nature in his manner, as well as a deference to the remarks and opinions of others, the want of which very often, in distinguished wits, offends the self-love of their hearers, and makes even the dues of admiration that they levy a sort of "*Droit du Seigneur*," paid with unwillingness and distaste.

No one was so ready and cheerful in promoting the amusements of a country-house; and on a rural excursion he was always the soul of the party. His talent at dressing a little dish was often put in requisition on such occasions, and an Irish stew was that on which he particularly plumed himself. Some friends of his recall with delight a day of this kind which they passed with him, when he made the whole party act over the Battle of the Pyramids on Marsden Moor, and ordered "Captain" Creevey and others upon various services, against the cows and donkeys entrenched in the ditches. Being of so playful a disposition himself, it was not wonderful that he should take such pleasure in the society of children. I have been told, as doubly characteristic of him, that he has often, at Mr. Monckton's, kept a chaise and four waiting half the day for him at the door, while he romped with the children.

In what are called *Vers de Société*, or drawing-room verses, he took great delight; and there remain among his papers several sketches of these trifles. I once heard him repeat, in a ball-room, some verses which he had lately written on Waltzing, and of which I remember the following:—

"With tranquil step, and timid, downcast glance,
Behold the well-pair'd couple now advance.
In such sweet posture our first Parents mov'd,
While, hand in hand, through Eden's bowers they rov'd;
Ere yet the Devil, with promise foul and false,
Turn'd their poor heads and taught them how to *Waltz*.
One hand grasps hers, the other holds her hip—
* * * * * * * *
For so the Law's laid down by Baron Trip[1]."

He had a sort of hereditary fancy for difficult trifling in poetry;

[1] This gentleman, whose name suits so aptly as a legal authority on the subject of Waltzing, was, at the time these verses were written, well known in the dancing circles.

—particularly for that sort, which consists in rhyming to the same word through a long string of couplets, till every rhyme that the language supplies for it is exhausted[1]. The following are specimens from a poem of this kind, which he wrote on the loss of a lady's trunk :—

"My Trunk!

"(*To Anne.*)

"Have you heard, my dear Anne, how my spirits are sunk?
Have you heard of the cause? Oh, the loss of my *Trunk!*
From exertion or firmness I've never yet slunk;
But my fortitude's gone with the loss of my *Trunk!*
Stout Lucy, my maid, is a damsel of spunk;
Yet she weeps night and day for the loss of my *Trunk!*
I'd better turn nun, and coquet with a monk;
For with whom can I flirt without aid from my *Trunk?*
* * * * * * * * *
Accurs'd be the thief, the old rascally hunks,
Who rifles the fair, and lays hands on their *Trunks!*
He, who robs the King's stores of the least bit of junk,
Is hang'd—while he's safe, who has plunder'd my *Trunk!*
* * * * * * * * * * *
There's a phrase amongst lawyers, when *nunc*'s put for *tunc;*
But, tunc and nunc both, must I grieve for my *Trunk!*
Huge leaves of that great commentator, old Brunk,
Perhaps was the paper that lin'd my poor *Trunk!*
But my rhymes are all out;—for I dare not use st—k[2];
'Twou'd shock Sheridan more than the loss of my *Trunk.*"

From another of these trifles (which, no doubt, produced much gaiety at the breakfast-table,) the following extracts will be sufficient :—

"Muse, assist me to complain,
While I grieve for Lady *Jane.*
I ne'er was in so sad a vein,
Deserted now by Lady *Jane.*
* * * * *
Lord Petre's house was built by Payne—
No mortal architect made *Jane.*
If hearts had windows, through the pane
Of mine you'd see sweet Lady *Jane.*
* * * * * *
At breakfast I could scarce refrain
From tears at missing lovely *Jane;*
Nine rolls I eat, in hopes to gain
The roll that might have fall'n to *Jane,*" etc.

Another, written on a Mr. *Bigg*, contains some ludicrous couplets :—

"I own he's not fam'd for a reel or a jig,
Tom Sheridan there surpasses Tom *Bigg.*

[1] Some verses by General Fitzpatrick on Lord Holland's father are the best specimen that I know of this sort of *Scherzo.*

[2] He had a particular horror of this word.

For, lam'd in one thigh, he is obliged to go zig—
Zag, like a crab—so no dancer is *Bigg*.
Those who think him a coxcomb, or call him a prig,
How little they know of the mind of my *Bigg!*
Tho' he ne'er can be mine, Hope will catch a twig—
Two Deaths—and I yet may become Mrs. *Bigg*.
Oh give me, with him, but a cottage and pig,
And content I would live on Beans, Bacon, and *Bigg*."

A few more of these light productions remain among his papers, but their wit is gone with those for whom they were written;—the wings of Time "eripuere *jocos*."

Of a very different description are the following striking and spirited fragments (which ought to have been mentioned in a former part of this work,) written by him, apparently, about the year 1794, and addressed to the Naval heroes of that period, to console them for the neglect they experienced from the Government, while ribands and titles were lavished on the Whig Seceders:—

"Never mind them, brave black Dick,
Though they've played thee such a trick—
Damn their ribands and their garters,
Get you to your post and quarters.
Look upon the azure sea,
There's a Sailor's Taffety!
Mark the Zodiac's radiant bow,
That's a collar fit for HOWE!—
And, than P—tl—d's brighter far,
The Pole shall furnish you a Star[1]!
Damn their ribands and their garters,
Get you to your post and quarters.
Think, on what things are ribands showered—
The two Sir Georges—Y——and H——d!
Look to what rubbish Stars will stick,
To Dicky H——n and Johnny D——k!
Would it be for your country's good,
That you might pass for Alec. H——d,
Or, perhaps,—and worse by half—
To be mistaken for Sir R——h!
Would you, like C——, pine with spleen,
Because your bit of silk was green?
Would you, like C——, change your side,
To have your silk new dipt and dyed?—
Like him, exclaim, 'My riband's hue
Was green—and now, by Heav'ns!'tis blue,
And, like him—stain your honour too!
Damn their ribands and their garters,

[1] This reminds me of a happy application which he made upon a subsequent occasion, of two lines of Dryden:—

"When men like Erskine go astray,
The stars are more in fault than they."

Get you to your post and quarters.
On the foes of Britain close,
While B——k garters his Dutch hose,
And cons, with spectacles on nose,
(While to battle *you* advance,)
His '*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*'"
* * * * * *

It has been seen, by a letter of his sister already given, that when young, he was generally accounted handsome; but in later years, his eyes were the only testimonials of beauty that remained to him. It was, indeed, in the upper part of his face that the Spirit of the man chiefly reigned;—the dominion of the world and the Senses being rather strongly marked out in the lower. In his person, he was above the middle size, and his general make was, as I have already said, robust and well proportioned. It is remarkable that his arms, though of powerful strength, were thin, and appeared by no means muscular. His hands were small and delicate: and the following couplet, written on a cast from one of them very livelily enumerates both its physical and moral qualities:—

"Good at a Fight, but better at a Play,
Godlike in giving, but—the Devil to Pay!"

Among his habits, it may not be uninteresting to know that his hours of composition, as long as he continued to be an author, were at night, and that he required a profusion of lights around him while he wrote. Wine, too, was one of his favourite helps to inspiration:—"If the thought (he would say) is slow to come, a glass of good wine encourages it, and, when it *does* come, a glass of good wine rewards it."

Having taken a cursory view of his Literary, Political, and Social qualities, it remains for me to say a few words upon that most important point of all, his Moral character.

There are few persons, as we have seen, to whose kind and affectionate conduct, in some of the most interesting relations of domestic life, so many strong and honourable testimonies remain. The pains he took to win back the estranged feelings of his father, and the filial tenderness with which he repaid long years of parental caprice, show a heart that had, at least, set out by the right road, however, in after years, it may have missed the way. The enthusiastic love which his sister bore him, and retained, unblighted by distance or neglect, is another proof of the influence of his amiable feelings, at that period of life when he was as yet unspoiled by the world. We have seen the romantic fondness which he preserved towards the first Mrs. Sheridan, even while doing his utmost, and in vain, to extinguish the same feeling in her. With the second

wife, a course, nearly similar, was run;—the same "scatterings and eclipses" of affection, from the irregularities and vanities in which he continued to indulge, but the same hold kept of each other's hearts to the last. Her early letters to him breathe a passion little short of idolatry, and her devoted attentions beside his death-bed showed that the essential part of the feeling still remained.

To claim an exemption for frailties and irregularities on the score of genius, while there are such names as Milton and Newton on record, were to be blind to the example which these and other great men have left, of the grandest intellectual powers combined with the most virtuous lives. But, for the bias given early to the mind by education and circumstances even the least charitable may be inclined to make large allowances. We have seen how idly the young days of Sheridan were wasted—how soon he was left (in the words of the Prophet) "to dwell carelessly," and with what an undisciplined temperament he was thrown upon the world, to meet at every step that never-failing spring of temptation, which, like the fatal fountain in the Garden of Armida, sparkles up for ever in the pathway of such a man:—

> "Un fonte sorge in lei, che vaghe e monde
> Ha l' acque sì, che i riguardanti asseta,
> Ma dentro ai freddi suoi cristalli asconde
> Di tosco estran malvagità secretà."

Even marriage, which is among the sedatives of other men's lives, but formed a part of the romance of his. The very attractions of his wife increased his danger, by doubling, as it were, the power of the world over him, and leading him astray by her light as well as by his own. Had his talents, even then, been subjected to the *manège* of a profession, there was still a chance that business, and the round of regularity which it requires, might have infused some spirit of order into his life. But the Stage—his glory and his ruin—opened upon him; and the property of which it made him master was exactly of that treacherous kind, which not only deceives a man himself, but enables him to deceive others, and thus combined all that a person of his carelessness and ambition had most to dread. An uncertain income, which, by eluding calculation, gives an excuse for improvidence [1], and, still more fatal, a facility

[1] How feelingly aware he was of this great source of all his misfortunes appears from a passage in the able speech which he delivered before the Chancellor, as Counsel in his own case, in the year 1799 or 1800:—

"It is a great disadvantage, relatively speaking, to any man, and especially to a very careless and a very sanguine man, to have possessed an uncertain and fluctuating income. That disadvantage is greatly increased, if the person so circumstanced has conceived himself to be in some degree entitled to presume, that,

of raising money, by which the lesson, that the pressure of distress brings with it is evaded till it comes too late to be of use—such was the dangerous power put into his hands, in his six-and-twentieth year, and amidst the intoxication of as deep and quick draughts of fame as ever young author quaffed. Scarcely had the zest of this excitement begun to wear off, when he was suddenly transported into another sphere, where successes still more flattering to his vanity awaited him. Without any increase of means, he became the companion and friend of the first Nobles and Princes, and paid the usual tax of such unequal friendships, by, in the end, losing them and ruining himself. The vicissitudes of a political life and those deceitful vistas into office that were for ever opening on his party, made his hopes as fluctuating and uncertain as his means, and encouraged the same delusive calculations on both. He seemed, at every new turn of affairs, to be on the point of redeeming himself; and the confidence of others in his resources was no less fatal to him than his own, as it but increased the facilities of ruin that surrounded him.

Such a career as this—so shaped towards wrong, so inevitably devious—it is impossible to regard otherwise than with the most charitable allowances. It was one long paroxysm of excitement—no pause for thought—no inducements to prudence—the attractions all drawing the wrong way, and a Voice, like that which Bossuet describes, crying inexorably from behind him, "On, On!"[1] Instead of wondering at the wreck that followed all this, our only surprise should be, that so much remained uninjured through the trial,—that his natural good feelings should have struggled to the last with his habits, and his sense of all that was right in conduct so long survived his ability to practise it.

by the exertion of his own talents, he may at pleasure increase that income—thereby becoming induced to make promises to himself which he may afterwards fail to fulfil.

"Occasional excess and frequent unpunctuality will be the natural consequences of such a situation. But, my Lord, to exceed an ascertained and limited income, I hold to be a very different matter. In that situation I have placed myself, (not since the present unexpected contention arose, for since then I would have adopted no arrangements,) but months since, by my Deed of Trust to Mr. Adam, and in that situation I shall remain until every debt on earth, in which the Theatre or I am concerned, shall be fully and fairly discharged. Till then I will live on what remains to me—preserving that spirit of undaunted independence which, both as a public and a private man, I trust, I have hitherto maintained."

[1] "La loi est prononcée; il faut avancer toujours. Je voudrois retourner sur mes pas; 'Marche, Marche!' Un poids invincible nous entraine; il faut sans cesse avancer vers le précipice. On se console pourtant, parce que de temps en temps on rencontre des objets qui nous divertissent, des eaux courantes, des fleurs qui passent. On voudroit arrêter; 'Marche, Marche!'"—*Sermon sur la Résurrection.*

Numerous, however, as were the causes that concurred to disorganise his moral character, in his pecuniary embarrassment lay the source of those blemishes that discredited him most in the eyes of the world. He might have indulged his vanity and his passions, like others, with but little loss of reputation, if the consequence of these indulgences had not been obtruded upon observation in the forbidding form of debts and distresses. So much did his friend Richardson, who thoroughly knew him, consider his whole character to have been influenced by the straightened circumstances in which he was placed, that he used often to say, "If an enchanter could, by the touch of his wand, endow Sheridan suddenly with fortune, he would instantly transform him into a most honourable and moral man." As some corroboration of this opinion, I must say that, in the course of the inquiries which my task of biographer imposed upon me, I have found all who were ever engaged in pecuniary dealings with him, not excepting those who suffered most severely by his irregularities (among which class I may cite the respected name of Mr. Hammersley), unanimous in expressing their conviction that he always *meant* fairly and honourably; and that to the inevitable pressure of circumstances alone, any failure that occurred in his engagements was to be imputed.

There cannot, indeed, be a stronger exemplification of the truth, that a want of regularity [1] becomes itself a vice, from the manifold evils to which it leads, than the whole history of Mr. Sheridan's pecuniary transactions. So far from never paying his debts, as is often asserted of him, he was in fact always paying; but in such a careless and indiscriminate manner, and with so little justice to himself or others, as often to leave the respectable creditor to suffer for his patience, while the fraudulent dun was paid two or three times over. Never examining accounts nor referring to receipts, he

[1] His improvidence in every thing connected with money was most remarkable. He would frequently be obliged to stop on his journies, for want of the means of getting on, and to remain living expensively at an inn, till a remittance could reach him. His letters to the treasurer of the theatre on these occasions were generally headed with the words, "Money-bound." A friend of his told me, that one morning, while waiting for him in his study, he cast his eyes over the heap of unopened letters that lay upon the table, and, seeing one or two with coronets on the seals, said to Mr. Westley, the treasurer, who was present, "I see we are all treated alike." Mr. Westley then informed him that he had once found, on looking over this table, a letter which he had himself sent, a few weeks before, to Mr. Sheridan, enclosing a ten-pound note, to release him from some inn, but which Sheridan, having raised the supplies in some other way, had never thought of opening. The prudent treasurer took away the letter, and reserved the enclosure for some future exigence.

Among instances of his inattention to letters, the following is mentioned. Going one day to the banking-house, where he was accustomed to receive his salary, as

seemed as if, (in imitation of his own Charles, preferring generosity to justice,) he wished to make *paying* as like as possible to *giving*. Interest, too, with its usual, silent accumulation, swelled every debt; and I have found several instances among his accounts where the interest upon a small sum had been suffered to increase till it outgrew the principal; — *minima pars ipsa puella sui*."

Notwithstanding all this, however, his debts were by no means so considerable as has been supposed. In the year 1808, he empowered Sir R. Berkely, Mr. Peter Moore, and Mr. Frederick Homan, by power of attorney, to examine into his pecuniary affairs, and take measures for the discharge of all claims upon him. These gentlemen, on examination, found that his *bonâ fide* debts were about ten thousand pounds, while his apparent debts amounted to five or six times as much. Whether from conscientiousness or from pride, however, he would not suffer any of the claims to be contested, but said that the demands were all fair, and must be paid just as they were stated; — though it was well known that many of them had been satisfied more than once. These gentlemen, accordingly, declined to proceed any farther with their commission.

On the same false feeling he acted in 1813-14, when the balance due on the sale of his theatrical property was paid him, in a certain number of Shares. When applied to by any creditor, he would give him one of these Shares, and allowing his claim entirely on his own showing, leave him to pay himself out of it, and refund the balance. Thus irregular at all times, even when most wishing to be right, he deprived honesty itself of its merits and advantages; and, where he happened to be just, left it doubtful (as Locke says of those religious people, who believe right by chance, without examination) "whether even the luckiness of the accident excused the irregularity of the proceeding [1]."

The consequence, however, of this continual paying was that the number of his creditors gradually diminished, and that ultimately the amount of his debts was, taking all circumstances into

Receiver of Cornwall, and where they sometimes accommodated him with small sums before the regular time of payment, he asked, with all due humility, whether they could oblige him with the loan of twenty pounds. "Certainly, Sir," said the clerk,—"would you like any more—fifty, or a hundred?" Sheridan, all smiles and gratitude, answered that a hundred pounds would be of the greatest convenience to him. "Perhaps, you would like to take two hundred, or three?" said the clerk. At every increase of the sum, the surprise of the borrower increased. "Have not you then received our letter?" said the clerk;—on which it turned out that, in consequence of the falling in of some fine, a sum of twelve hundred pounds had been lately placed to the credit of the Receiver-General, and that, from not having opened the letter written to apprise him, he had been left in ignorance of his good luck.

[1] Chapter on Reason.

account, by no means considerable. Two years after his death it appeared by a list made up by his Solicitor from claims sent in to him, in consequence of an advertisement in the newspapers, that the *bonâ fide* debts amounted to about five thousand five hundred pounds.

If, therefore, we consider his pecuniary irregularities in reference to the injury that they inflicted upon others, the quantum of evil for which he is responsible becomes, after all, not so great. There are many persons in the enjoyment of fair characters in the world, who would be happy to have no deeper encroachment upon the property of others to answer for, and who may well wonder by what unlucky management Sheridan could contrive to found so extensive a reputation for bad pay upon so small an amount of debt.

Let it never, too, be forgotten, in estimating this part of his character, that had he been less consistent and disinterested in his public conduct, he might have commanded the means of being independent and respectable in private. He might have died a rich apostate, instead of closing a life of patriotism in beggary. He might (to use a fine expression of his own) have "hid his head in a coronet," instead of earning for it but the barren wreath of public gratitude. While, therefore, we admire the great sacrifice that he made, let us be tolerant to the errors and imprudences which it entailed upon him; and, recollecting how vain it is to look for any thing unalloyed in this world, rest satisfied with the Martyr, without requiring, also, the Saint.

THE END.

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